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AND
TRAVEL
IN SPAIN*



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FISHING AND TRAVEL IN SPAIN

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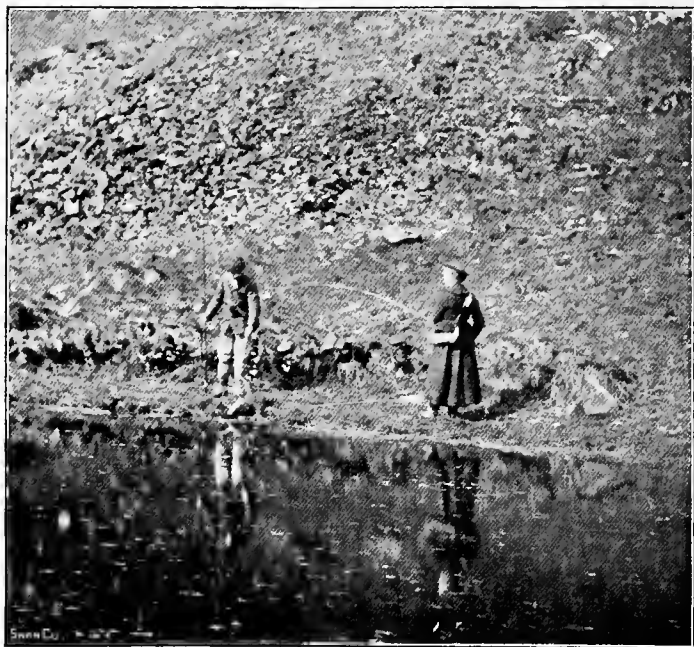
FISHING IN. WALES

THE STORY OF SEVILLE

PRACTICAL HINTS ON ANGLING

TALES FROM THE WESTERN MOORS

LIKE STARS THAT FALL



NETTED.

Frontispiece.

FISHING AND TRAVEL IN SPAIN

A Guide to the Angler

BY

WALTER M. GALLICHAN
(‘GEOFFREY MORTIMER’)

AUTHOR OF ‘FISHING IN WALES’

WITH EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS



LONDON
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1904

TO

MY WIFE

MY FISHING PUPIL AND COMPANION

THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY

INSCRIBED

P R E F A C E

THERE are more ways than one of seeing a fresh country. One may make a lightning tour through some of the chief towns, race through the picture-galleries, and glance at the buildings of interest. The traveller does not learn very much of the country and the people by flying along the beaten track and staying in conventional tourist hotels. When I wander, at home or abroad, I choose for preference a cross-country line. The hills, the rivers, and the forests, appeal to me quite as powerfully as the cities, cathedrals, and works made by hands. With the rustic person everywhere I have a sympathy. I love the open air and those who dwell where there is calm and breathing-space.

Our journey in Spain and Portugal was rendered varied and instructive by combining the recreation

of trout-fishing in the wilder regions with visits to the towns and their museums of art. In this chronicle I have written chiefly upon the days spent by lonely streams and in little rough hamlets of the mountains. Few anglers visit Spain expressly for the pursuit of their sport. This is because so few fishermen know where to go and how to fish in that delightful country. I went, I saw, and I was not disappointed. When opportunity offers I hope to go again, equipped with the experience of my first itinerary. It is not true that all the Spanish rivers are 'poached to death,' that the trout are small, and that poor sport awaits the angler in the Peninsula. I have shown in these pages that some of the rivers teem with trout of a sport-giving weight. These streams are free, and they will compare with waters in Great Britain which can only be fished at a high charge. I might even say that they will contrast with them to the decided advantage of the Spanish rivers. The reason for my faith will be found in this narrative.

Some of the matter forming these chapters appeared first in the columns of the *Field*. With

the kind permission of the editor of that journal, I have incorporated portions of the articles in this volume. I also beg to thank the art editor of the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* for leave to reproduce some photographs which formed the illustrations to my wife's account of a lady angler's adventures in Spain.

WALTER M. GALLICHAN.

THE CRIMBLES,
YOULGREAVE,
BAKEWELL,
April, 1904. 3

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Fishing and Travel in Spain

CHAPTER I

EN PASSANT

‘Look at those droll English people! Wherever they go they take fishing-rods with them,’ said one Frenchman to another as we boarded the packet at Newhaven.

The sea was calm as an inland pool, and we had a quick passage to Dieppe. At last my wife and I were on the way to Spain. The plan of travel had been discussed for months, during a winter sojourn among the Norfolk Broads, and preparations made for an unconventional tour of the Peninsula. And now we were really upon the road to the land of sunshine and vines, the country of Cervantes and Velazquez, the home of the mingled races of the East and the North, the romantic Iberians. We were going to leave the beaten path whenever it was possible, to stay

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in mountain villages, to explore the river gorges with our fly-rods in our hands, and to study the manners and customs of rural Spain in the remotest regions of the kingdom.

Perhaps it was that delightful book 'Wild Spain,' by Chapman and Buck, that first turned my thoughts toward the possibilities of sport with the rod in the Peninsula. It is true that these authors devoted most of their time to shooting; but a part of their volume treats upon trout-fishing. Their account of angling in Spanish rivers of the northern provinces is not highly encouraging to the fisherman. The writers appear to have fished occasionally by way of passing a few hours, when there was no opportunity for bustard or partridge shooting, or in the summer months when the gun was laid aside. They had a rather doleful experience of some much-poached rivers. Upon this subject I have something to say in my pages. At any rate, in spite of Spanish poachers, and the assertion of a London fishing-tackle dealer, who said that the trout of Spain were very small and not too plentiful, we resolved to see the rivers, fish in them, and judge for ourselves concerning their sport-giving capacity.

The 'Angler's Diary' gave a more hopeful account of fishing in Spain. I learned from this annual that one might travel cheaply in the Basque Provinces, Asturias, and Galicia, and obtain in some parts very good fishing from the end of February until the close of the season. There was also the probability of salmon and sea-trout-fishing in certain of the Biscayan rivers. Some articles in the *Field* were useful in the information which they gave upon several streams of the North of Spain. But, as I had arranged to contribute an account of my Spanish fishing experiences to that journal, I determined to seek new waters, and to furnish a fresh narrative of sport.

Only the keen fisherman can sympathize to the full with the zest with which one seeks adventures upon a new river. The pleasure is great when the angler finds himself for the first time on the bank of an untried stream in his own country. It is an even greater enjoyment to roam by a riverside in a new land, and to test one's skill with the trout of foreign waters. The complete change in one's environment is in itself fascinating; and there is a charm in the thought that trout, uninstructed through long generations in the arts

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of the wet-fly, dry-fly, minnow, and clear-water worm anglers, may await you in sequestered pools of wild and, perchance, unexploited streams.

Speculation of this kind occupied my thoughts as we rolled slowly in the train through the green, monotonous levels of France to the first glimpse of the majestic Pyrenees. Beyond this rocky barrier was Spain, the country of our dreams. We crossed the Nive and Nivelle, streams that looked likely for the fly-rod, and soon the wide estuary of the Bidasoa, the first Spanish river, came in sight. This stream of mountain birth waters a series of beautiful valleys in the province of Navarre, till it merges into the tidal waters between Hendaye, the last town in France, and Irun, the first town within Spanish territory.

My wife took the bundle of rods, which had aroused the mirth of the Frenchmen at Newhaven, and I carried the two bags to the Customs office. The officials rummaged the contents of the bags, and paid marked attention to the fishing-gear.

‘What is it?’ I understood the officer to say.

‘Cañas para pesca’ (Rods for fishing), I replied, timidly uttering my imperfect Spanish.

He handed me back the bundle, and a porter,

in a striped blouse and a blue Basque cap, intimated that he would carry our luggage to the fonda (hotel). We stepped out of the railway-station, and scented the salt water of the blue Bay of Biscay. The porter gesticulated, and talked in his native tongue. A group of loungers stared curiously, wondering whether we were French or English folk ; and we came to the fonda, odorous of garlic and olive-oil, with a dimly-lighted dining-room.

It was early March and chilly. The sole means of warming the house was a copper brazier of smouldering charcoal on the staircase landing. A real caballero was pacing up and down, wrapped in his capa (cloak). Yes, and there was the tinkle of a guitar in the street ! We were indeed in Spain. A gleam from the setting sun rested upon a gray peak of the Pyrenees. We sat down to our first Spanish dinner. There was red wine upon the table and a dish of green olives.

After the meal, I questioned the landlady's son about the fishing in the Bidasoa. He spoke French, and told me that we must take the coach for several leagues up the river, to the town of San Esteban. There were trout there in abun-

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dance. Some were as long as your hand; others were almost as long as your forearm. For his part, he had never fished; but he knew that English people and a few French came to fish in the Bidasoa.

CHAPTER II

A WEEK ON THE BIDASOA

As I have said, the Bidasoa is the first Spanish river which one crosses upon entering the Peninsula from Bordeaux. Its lovely valley will dwell long in my memory. Most Englishmen know of the Bidasoa through its association with the Duke of Wellington's famous crossing of the river with his troops during the Peninsular War. Only a few of my compatriots have heard of the stream as one yielding sport to the fisherman; but among those few are two or three Britons who travel in the spring from their wintering places in the South of France to revisit favourite lengths of the charming river.

At Irun the Bidasoa widens to a fine estuary. There is nothing to detain the fisherman in Irun, though, if he has journeyed from Paris, he will be glad to rest for a night at the hotel in the plaza. Before starting up the river, let him communicate

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with the Marqués Eugenio Uztáriz, at the Palacio Reparacea, Oyeregui, Provincia de Navarra, Spain, who receives paying guests in a fine old mansion on the left bank of the Bidasoa. The palacio contains several bedrooms, but now and then in the fishing season there is a run of visitors. It is therefore advisable to engage a room beforehand.

I found these comfortable quarters by an accident. Upon leaving Irun by the diligence, it was our intention to stay at a riverside inn about sixteen miles up the valley. But the only room in the venta was occupied by an English angler, and the hostess informed us that there was no other accommodation for travellers for several miles on the road. Fortunately, one of our fellow-passengers in the coach proved a friend in need. He was an officer of artillery and a native of Navarre. 'If you will ride on for three hours,' he said, 'I will find you lodging in a palace where they are used to English people.' The prospect of staying in a palace was certainly alluring, though I must confess that such fortune seemed at first unlikely to fall to our lot after setting out in the hope of obtaining quarters in a rough roadside inn. However, our companion

assured me in Spanish and French that he would undertake to find us bed and board for as long as we chose in a well-appointed house. And not only this: he engaged to send on a messenger from the next village, where the coach stayed an hour, to announce our coming to the hostess at the palace.

My courteous friend was as good as his word. When the diligence drew up in the dark at the Palacio Reparacea, two servants took possession of our baggage, and the proprietor himself appeared to conduct us to an enormous dining-room. A quarter of an hour after our arrival we sat down to a well-served dinner of five courses. By what process of conjuration these preparations were so speedily accomplished I am quite unable to relate. The bedroom was ready, warm water was provided, and a neat and comely Basque girl, named Maria, showed us every attention at the table. The bedroom, by the way, was that wherein the Iron Duke slept in the stirring days of the fighting in this part of the Bidasoa Valley.

In the long room I found a visitors' book with several English names in it, and some notes on the fishing. A bookshelf had upon it several novels with familiar British titles. So much

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for the quarters, which I can only speak of in praise and remember with pleasure. As to the terms per day, it is no secret that we were asked the modest price of 5 pesetas—*i.e.*, about 3s. 6d. in British money.

And now for the trout-fishing. Soon after breakfast next day we went out to the river, which almost washes the walls of the palace, and began to fish a sharp run of rough water. My first capture was a samlet. I cast again, and hooked a trout, a quarter-pounder, on a blue dun. It was my first Spanish trout. I looked at him curiously and lovingly. He was clean, plump, and prettily spotted, with nothing to distinguish him from our British trout. But he fought more lustily than our half-pound trout; indeed, in all the Spanish waters the fish are surprisingly strong.

We spent a very pleasant mid-day on the length near the palace. The day was soft and rather dull, and the trout were taking the natural flies with their spring avidity. Beautiful woods sloped to the river, and above them were outlying peaks of the Pyrenees. The scene resembled a Scotch glen. Primroses dotted the banks, and in a gleam of sunshine hibernating butterflies fluttered by the

river. During a lively rise from about twelve till two I caught sixteen trout, and hooked and released a number of samlets. Here, for the first time, I met a Spanish rod fisherman. He spoke the Basque language and a little French. His rod was made of maize stalks, with a hazel switch for the top, his cast was coarse, and his flies clumsy and big. Still, he was keen and clever, and he knew all the good runs in the river. Another native, who watched me one morning when I was pricking or catching a trout at every cast, wrung his hands and uttered strange cries in sheer excitement.

That morning gave me really fine sport for about half an hour. I noticed several rises to blue duns in a nice swift glide close to the opposite bank. Wading in almost to the tops of my waders, I was able to cast over the rising trout. A jerk at the top joint of the rod and a screech from the reel followed almost every cast. One after another, without moving more than a few yards downstream, I brought trout to the net. Nine fish, weighing from 6 ounces to $\frac{3}{4}$ pound, and three fish lost, was my score in that memorable half-hour. Then suddenly the blue duns vanished, and not a trout would move. I went

further down the river, and took four more fish in a short time. One of them was $\frac{3}{4}$ pound, and, though I held him hard, it was five minutes before I could bring him to the net.

We spent a delightful week at the Palacio Reparacea, and if the rain had not refused to fall we should have prolonged our stay in that hospitable retreat. The river was somewhat low and clear when we arrived, and each day the water became lower and the weather brighter.

During a mild wet spring the Bidasoa may be relied upon as a sport-giving river. I had quite enough success to make me long for a few days upon its banks during the coming season. Sumptuous board and lodging, attention and kindness, good fishing, and grand scenery, are the attractions of this length of the Bidasoa. There is no charge for fishing beyond the five-peseta license, which must be stamped by a provincial Governor. The civil guards are quick to notice a strange angler on the river, and the license should be obtained before beginning to fish. If the license cannot be stamped at Irun, the diligence-driver will bring one from Pampeluna.

For some miles above the palace the Bidasoa is very rough, with stretches of tumbling water and



THE RIO BIDASOA IN NAVARRE.

many rocks in the stream. I fished upstream one day, but found the exertion of scrambling too severe to set against the resultant sport. For wading, the best water is between the two bridges near the palacio, and as far down as the little town of San Esteban. Below this point I did not venture. Judging by my observation during the diligence ride from Irun, I should say that there are several miles of fishable water between that town and Oyeregui.

After my article on the Bidasoa had appeared in the *Field*, a disappointed angler, who adopted the lugubrious *nom de guerre* of 'Caught Nothing,' wrote to that journal declaring that the river had been mercilessly poached during the summer following my visit to the Palacio Reparacea. 'Considering that the rivers in Spain,' wrote this fisherman, 'have been poached, dynamited, night-lined and netted since prehistoric times, without being restocked, is it reasonable to expect fish of any size?' To this pertinent query I will offer an affirmative answer. I have seen, caught, handled, and eaten, trout up to 2 pounds in weight from these 'depleted' rivers. Other anglers have had the same tangible experience, and on the authority of the well-known 'Angler's Diary' published at the

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Field office, we learn that the river Sil (afterwards the Minho) in Galicia, contains trout as large as those of almost any river in the world.

Wherever trout are found, there also will poachers pursue their arts. Let that always be accepted as an axiom, and accepted with philosophic patience, though not with indifference. We need not travel to Spain to find the illicit fisherman. The records of salmon-poaching in the United Kingdom during the exceptionally good seasons of 1903 and 1904, as set down in the newspapers, are sufficient proof that the illegal taking of spawning fish is a widespread and profitable industry. It is useless to blink this plain evidence, and to suppose that the reported cases of poaching represent one-half of the full extent of the depredations.

Most poaching is undetected. It is successfully conducted throughout Christendom and elsewhere. The receivers and organizers in our orderly and law-abiding nation are often among the 'respectable' members of the community. I am myself in a position to mention the names of a doctor, a solicitor, and a schoolmaster, who are 'in' with a powerful and well-managed syndicate of salmon-poachers. The ignorance of riparian

owners, members of boards of conservators, and fishermen generally, concerning the nefarious destruction of fish in their own districts is pathetic. How often I have heard this formula: 'Oh no, there's no poaching here! The rivers are too well watched.' Now, grant that two keepers, both alert and able-bodied, are told off to watch a four-mile length of a river: is it possible for these men to guard every pool of that stream by day and night during every season of the year? You may preserve, restock, scrupulously observe the size limit, kill all coarse fish, and employ a small regiment of water-bailiffs; but there will still be poaching more or less.

My friend 'Caught Nothing' asserts that the Spanish rivers have been poached almost to the extermination of trout, and he maintains that the Bidasoa will be 'troutless' in two years. Why in *two* years? The Bidasoa has suffered this alleged depleting process for centuries. No doubt during every dry summer for 300 or 400 years the natives have netted, night-lined, groped, and what not. And yet in 1902 anglers could still contrive to make a very fair basket of trout on any favourable day during the spring months.

No one will say that the famous Dove is a

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doomed river. It is true that the trout are ten-fold more wary than their ancestors of Izaak Walton's day; but the stream still produces its millions of fry every year, and there are fishermen who know how to lure the wily trout of that classic river. Yet I am told, on very good authority, that the upper reaches of the Dove were systematically poached all the year round in the days of our grandfathers. You can diminish the number of fish in a stream by netting and other illegal methods, but *depletion* is another matter. Even the use of dynamite will not deplete rivers with big and deep pools, such as alternate with shallows on the larger streams of Spain.

All the deplorable and abominable practices of the poachers of Spain or any other country work great harm, and threaten the angler's right to enjoy his inoffensive recreation. But the greater evils are river pollution and the modern system of field drainage. From these destructive forces trout cannot escape. Spain is, happily, almost free from poisoned and contaminated waters. Some of the rivers in the mining districts of the North are polluted and fishless; but in the well-watered Peninsula there are thousands of miles of

pellucid and beautiful streams, with no factories, works, mines, or big cities, within leagues of their lengths. Such a river is the Bidasoa in its course from the mountains of Navarre to its first meeting with the tidal waters. Its numberless hill tributaries are the natural hatcheries of trout, and the river possesses all the proper qualities for the production of fish-life.

There are rivers in Spain that contain much bigger trout. My heaviest fish was $\frac{3}{4}$ pound, and I saw none that appeared heavier, though I was told that pounders are fairly common in some of the rivers. The conclusion of the whole matter, so far as my experience goes, is that the Bidasoa gave me as much sport as I should expect in one of the Welsh or Yorkshire streams of repute during a week of average March weather. And as regards the question of cost, the Bidasoa certainly has it for cheapness when compared with the most moderate of our subscription and ticket waters. The fishing is free, except for the license, costing about 3s.; and the charges for board and lodging are certainly lower than one pays in England for the less dainty cookery and indifferent accommodation provided by the average fishing hostelry.

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The venta, or roadside inn, at Yanci, lower down the river, has one room to spare for fishermen. I am told that the place is clean and the food presentable. An English gentleman, whose name is associated with the turf, has been the guest there more than once after wintering in the South of France. I do not think that this angler would visit Yanci if there were no trout there.

Before our departure from Oyeregui, a gentleman, with the title of Chevalier, and his wife, arrived on fishing bent. He had learned about the Bidasoa from a fishing-tackle manufacturer in the North of England, and had travelled from St. Jean de Luz to Irun by rail, and on to the palacio by diligence. The new-comer gently reproved me when I told him that I had given a few artificial flies to the local anglers.

‘You’ll teach them to fish,’ he said.

‘That is my intention,’ I answered. ‘Infect a man with the passion for fly fishing, and you make him a sportsman. I hope that the natives, who have seen that trout can be caught by fair and interesting methods, may be persuaded to become fishermen instead of poachers.’

But the Chevalier was sceptical.

One afternoon my fellow-traveller, the artillery

officer who had shown us so much kindness on the road from Irun, paid me a visit. My stock of conversational Spanish was scantier then than at the end of my six months of wandering. Still, we contrived to talk upon several subjects, helping one another with phrases in English, French, and Spanish. Our visitor was a handsome man, with blue eyes and a fair beard. In his blue boina, a cap resembling the tam-o'-shanter, he looked like a 'braw Scot' from Perthshire. He told me that his favourite sport was quail-shooting. I questioned him concerning the wild animals and the game of the district, and I learned that sangres wild-boars, were preserved for hunting on an estate not far from the palacio. Deer were also found in the neighbourhood.

'Are there still brigands in Spain?' I asked.

The officer smiled, and replied:

'Yes, a few. Show me your map.'

I gave him a map of Spain, and, opening it, he put his finger down near to Toledo, and then upon Granada.

My friend was not a fisherman (pescador), but he liked trout to eat. I offered him my morning's spoil, which, with pressure, he accepted. He wished that he could speak English fluently; he had taught

himself enough of the language to translate a book upon botany for his daughter. With French he had a perfect acquaintance, and, being a Basque by birth, he spoke that strange old tongue, as well as the pure Castilian Spanish.

Long live the Basques! They are a charming, hospitable, sturdy, and honest race. Their country is one of noble mountains, rocky gorges, and shaggy hills, wilder than Scotland's Highlands, but not unlike them. In their hardiness and integrity the Basques are Scottish; in their gaiety they are Irish. Their frames are usually spare, and they move with a lissome grace. Treat them as caballeros, and they will show you every kindness. One of their foibles is 'patriotism.' The love of one's country is everywhere commendable; but an exaggerated patriotic sense often manifests itself in nations, including our own, in a prejudice which is perhaps most fitly described as parochial. I will say no more. The Basques are a lovable folk. They have the virility and the native intelligence that make for progress. Long live the brave Basques in the glorious region for which they have striven against foes since the time of the Moors!

We left the delightful old palacio and its

courteous owner with reluctance. The hostess hoped that we would come again. Maria took our fishing-rods and bags, and a diminutive lad, a foundling in the service of the Marqués, staggered down the broad staircase under the leather trunk. It was too heavy a load for those narrow shoulders and thin legs. I took the trunk, in spite of Maria's protests and amazement, and carried it to the venta to await the coach.

A soldier on Excise duty drew near and eyed us closely. I gave him a military salute, which he returned. Then came the clatter of six mules' hoofs upon the dusty road, and the jangling of their harness bells, and the rocking, swaying vehicle drew up at the door of the inn. Our traps were placed on the roof of the coach, and we took our seats in the interior. Maria waved her hand, the little crowd of rustics smiled a farewell, the driver cracked his formidable whip and cursed a mule named Tia (Aunt), and we started on the long stage to the venta at the head of a lonely and steep pass.

As we ascended, rain began to patter on the roof of the diligence. It had come too late. I sighed and thought of the freshened river, and the sport that I might have enjoyed had I remained for a few more days in the lovely vale of Oyeregui.

CHAPTER III

TROUT-FISHING ON THE RIO ASON

DURING March, 1902, the weather throughout Europe was more than usually variable. In Northern Spain one day was as warm as mid-summer in England, and the next cold, with a north-easter blowing, and snow falling in the higher regions. At Oyeregui we had a week of warm weather, and upon one day, at least, the heat was oppressive at noon. When we left Bilbao, *en route* for the Rio Ason, the day was gray, with tokens of rain in the sky.

I would warn fishermen not to waste their time in fishing the streams in the immediate vicinity of the manufacturing town of Bilbao. Ironworks and mines mar the scenery near this port, and the rivers are mostly polluted. On the authority of the British Consul at San Sebastian—a beautiful watering-place a few miles to the west of Irun—I learned that the river there gives no sport to

the rod fisherman. The coast fishing, however, should be good. Sea-bream and other fish are very abundant off the rocks, and there are plenty of small boats on hire. In the estuary at San Sebastian I saw large shoals of fish at low-tide, which looked like gray mullet. A Spaniard told me that they were difficult to catch with the rod and line. There is rod fishing at this place, for I saw a woman collecting small crabs for bait, and long lines hung along the quay to dry.

Between San Sebastian and Bilbao several streams flow into the Bay of Biscay. The river most noted for trout is the Deva, and while running by its side in the train I saw several rises on one pool, and the usual fishing-nets hanging on walls. A day or two might be spent on the Deva, if the angler's route lies that way, as it will if he travels from Irun to Bilbao.

From Bilbao to Santander is a railway-journey of a few hours. The train travelled in the sedate manner to which we were growing accustomed, and we were soon in a lovely valley, with rocky hillsides and hamlets built on ledges. As we proceeded the scenery became even finer. We crossed a few streams, and drew near to a range of gray, snow-capped mountains. Our com-

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panions were mostly Basques of the working class. The men wore the customary striped blouses, boinas, and cloth trousers, and for their foot-wear shoes of canvas, adorned with red or scarlet worsted, and soled with hemp.

There we had our first view of the Ason in its upper lengths. The river rushes impetuously in a series of narrow gorges, to widen into deep pools and spread over gravelly shallows. It seemed an ideal water for trout. Near to one of the little stations we saw a pescador with a long, clumsy rod, which he was using with both hands.

About a league above the tidal water of the Ason, in the province of Santander, is the village of Ampuero, with its stone bridge, large weir, and tributary brook hurrying from the mountains. Here we left the train on this dull March day, bent upon fishing and research concerning the rivers of this wild district of Northern Spain. Most of the villages in the Peninsula possess a posada, or inn, but we were dubious as to the nature of the hospitality which Ampuero provides for the stranger. Our doubts were, however, dispelled when we ascended a broad staircase to a light and clean dining-room, with large windows and balconies, and encountered an elderly and most

courteous señora and her pretty niece, who at once made us understand that we were not the first English anglers to stay in the house. Our hostess then proceeded to enumerate the dishes which she could provide at a cost of 5 pesetas a day, the menu including fowl, meat, fish, eggs, wine, coffee, and liqueurs. No one but a gourmand could possibly grumble at such fare, while the price was less than the cost of the poorest board and lodging in an English fishing-village; so we at once decided to take a room in the Posada Gabriele and to dine at the general table.

In the afternoon a soft rain began to fall, when I put on my wading-stockings and started for a trial hour with the trout below the weir. The weather had been hopelessly bright and fine for a fortnight at least, and we had already noted the clearness of the water. But there seemed the likelihood of sport in the sharp stream, and, putting on a cast with a March brown and a blue dun, I opened the campaign, and immediately caught a smolt in its silvery mail. This proved, at any rate, that there were salmon in the Ason, and the capture of half a dozen samlets in a few minutes led one to suppose that a considerable number of fish ascend the river to spawn. A

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deeper run yielded the first trout, one of 6 ounces, which fought like a Scotch three-quarter-pounder. The rain now pattered down steadily, but the more it rained the better the trout rose, and for twenty minutes I rose, pricked, and caught fish with rapidity. One trout, which escaped by leaping, was a two-pound fish, and I lost another after a short fight in the rough water.

My wife had not unpacked her rod. While she watched me from the bank, a group of village children gathered around her. They were amazed to see me standing up to my knees in the river. My wife's fishing-coat of mackintosh greatly interested them. They had never seen such a garment. I learned from these youngsters that there were salmon in the pool which I was fishing—salmon of an extraordinary size, judging by the children's estimate of their length. I carried six trout back to the inn at dinner-time. The biggest was just upon $\frac{3}{4}$ pound, and the smallest about 6 ounces. A steady rain set in with nightfall.

I rose early the next morning, and found that more snow had fallen on the mountains, though it was not lying in the valley. The river was swollen and discoloured, and, worst of all, tainted with melting snow.

We went out after breakfast and tried the fly. It was a hopeless case. The Ason seemed to be rising, and even the worm was refused by the trout. But the next day was genial, and the river, though high, was in fair order for fly fishing. Señora Lopez, of the fonda, gave us a prodigious luncheon. There were three big mutton-chops, half a yard of white bread, four hard-boiled eggs, a piece of cream cheese, a packet of biscuits, some oranges, and a pint bottle of red wine. When I had carried this weight of provender, and my wading-stockings, brogues, mackintosh, rod, and landing-net, a couple of miles on this warm, moist spring morning, I wished that our hostess had been less liberal with the contents of her larder.

We followed a well-made highroad, up the left bank of the river, for nearly three miles. The river flows close to the road, and at a pretty bend, where the stream forms a series of sharps and shallow pools, we crossed a meadow to the water-side. Birds were twittering in the budding trees fringing the stream. I saw a few blue duns sail by while we arranged our tackle. One might have been in Yorkshire instead of in Spain, for this part of the Ason reminded me of a length of the

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Ure near Hackfall. No one was in sight. The river was our own for the nonce.

We began to cast with three flies, a blue dun on point, an orange dun for the second dropper, and a March brown as an upper dropper. The orange dun was a hackle; the other flies were winged. A samlet came up at my first cast, hooked himself firmly, and was back in the water in a few seconds. The first trout of the day fell to my wife. He took the orange dun, and made a short, brave fight before I netted him. We put him on the spring-balance, and he weighed a little over $\frac{1}{2}$ pound.

Soon after this capture I took a brace of small trout in a little run near the bank, and turned over a bigger fish. A half-pounder took the blue dun, and sundry samlets were caught and returned to the river. It was now noon. We waded across to an islet near a weir, and sat down among the osiers to eat our luncheon. While we sat there, a salmon, weighing between 8 and 10 pounds, leapt out of the water a few yards from the bank. I was soon upon my feet, trying to lure him with a sea-trout fly. But he was not to be tempted.

The afternoon gave us better sport. While making a long cast across a turbulent run into the

quieter water on the other side, I felt a fish. In an instant he turned his head downstream, entered the foaming run, and rushed away at a tremendous pace. Nearly 30 yards of line left the reel before the fish checked. My wife waded in, took the landing-net, and anxiously watched my bent rod, while I recovered line foot by foot.

‘Have you seen him?’ she whispered.

‘No, but he feels like a four-pounder in this stream,’ I said, trying to work the fish towards the bank.

Presently the trout jumped. He was a big golden creature, but not 4 pounds in weight. I judged that he would need careful holding with my drawn cast and small hook.

This was one of the wildest trout I have ever played. It may seem absurd, but it was nearly ten minutes before I brought him into the dead water near a sandy beach. At no moment in the struggle was I able to get below my fish. If I pursued him, he went further down the stream, and threatened to take me out of my depth. The river-bed was rough, and there were some treacherous holes. The trout jumped more than once; in short, he tried every trick known to an

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intelligent fish. At last I drew him gently on to the sand and seized him. He was very brilliant, clean, plump, and in the pink of condition. He weighed $1\frac{3}{4}$ pounds.

Stimulated by this success, we went up the river to another run, where we found both trout and samlets on the rise. The latter were certainly more abundant than the trout, but a few more half-pound fish were dropped into the bag. By this time the sun was low and the rise was over. So we took our rods to pieces, drank the last glass of the thin, sharp wine, and started for Ampuero along the right bank. This is the most picturesque side of the stream. A little path rises and sinks along the rough hillside, where many beautiful ferns grow among the rocks and bogs. In some parts the walking is not too safe, for the path is narrow and slippery, and there are sombre deep pools below the cliff.

Our catch of trout was spread out for the inspection of the señora, her son and niece. They expressed astonishment at our skill. 'Did the señora catch the big one?' My wife said 'No.' But was she not the first *mujer pesca* (woman fisher) who had ever been seen or heard of in Ampuero? Had not her reputation already

reached the surrounding villages? Of course, it was the señora who caught the biggest trout. 'Bueno! bueno!' The good hostess patted my wife's cheek. We presented the landlady with the big trout and some of the others. The remainder were fried for ourselves.

The average weight of the trout in the Ason is $\frac{1}{2}$ pound, but the strength and gameness of the fish are astonishing, and I would rather catch these lively half-pounders than fish of double their weight in certain English and Welsh rivers. Possessing every natural advantage for the plentiful production of trout, the Ason is well stocked with fish, and it is lucky that the river is productive, for the natives have no notion of preservation. The chief injury to the river is caused by the use of nets in some of the salmon-pools, and by the capture of immature fish in poke-nets during low-water in the summer. Nevertheless, I know subscription waters in Great Britain that are considered good lengths, and yet yield no better baskets than the Ason, which is free to everyone. We were often followed along the riverside by a group of excited spectators, who greatly coveted our English-made tackle, and sometimes begged for moscas—*i.e.*, flies.

The Spanish angler pursues his sport under such disadvantages that it is no great wonder if he adopts nefarious modes of fish-catching. A fly-rod can hardly be bought in Spain, and no artificial flies are made, except those home-made, badly-tied lures employed by the village fishermen. It is, therefore, easy enough to treble the take of the native angler, who flogs the streams with a piece of cord tied to a maize-stalk, and uses a coarse cast armed with an impossible fly on a big hook. During a week's fishing we met four or five fishermen, but the best bag any of them could show was a brace of trout. They catch a large number of samlets, which, needless to state, go into their baskets.

This destruction of salmon-fry may cause the angler to inquire whether salmon-fishing with the rod is worth a trial in the Ason. In spite of the utterly irrational system of netting in the river, a very fair number of salmon are taken with a rod and line. We were too early for a good run of fish, but a few salmon had been caught before our arrival, and one leapt from the water one day in a pool which we were fishing for trout.

The only sporting angler of the district, a very courteous Spanish gentleman, informed us that he

Trout-fishing on the Río Ason 33

sometimes caught both salmon and sea-trout later in the season. He recommended big flies for salmon, and said that many of 25 pounds were taken in the nets, and occasionally on the rod. The salmon-rights on about four miles of the river above Ampuero are owned by the Alcalde, or Mayor, of the little town of Gibaja. This gentleman sold the right of fishing with nets by auction three years ago, and it was acquired by four residents in Ampuero. One of these is the son of our hostess at the Posada Gabriele, and from him I learned that the best runs of salmon are during the summer months.

Now, although four speculators consider it worth their while to pay about £40 a year for the fishing-right on this length, they express extreme astonishment at the folly of returning samlets to the river, and apparently take no interest in preserving the water. Whenever the villagers saw us throw in samlets, they implored us not to waste fish, and held up their hands in wonderment at our stupidity. Stranger still, the aforesaid señor of the inn was quite unmoved when his mother begged us to bring home all the samlets for the larder. Truly, all that is fish comes to the net of the Spanish pescador. My

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readers will doubtless imagine that the result of such wasteful practices is decimation of the salmon, but it is not so. A great number of salmon spawn in the river, and samlets literally swarm. In a few hours one day I caught sixty-five samlets in a short length of the Ason. When I told the people of the inn that I had returned all the *pequeños*, or little fish, to the water, their disappointment was almost pathetic. It was useless to attempt to convince them that they were foolish to rent a part of the river, and at the same time to encourage the destruction of immature fish.

They left a note on the table after breakfast one day, begging us to bring *all* fish to the house. It was Easter week, and fish was in demand for the table.

There was a tobacco-shop in the village, kept by a *señora*. This woman was much interested in our movements.

‘Do you sell your fish?’ she inquired.

I shook my head. What eccentricity, to spend eight hours of the day, standing for the most of the time up to one’s thighs in a swift stream, in early spring, catching a few trout purely for recreation! The *señora* could not understand

such madness. And then we actually threw in the *pequeños*. Ah, what waste of good fish, when there were so many *pobres* (poor folk) about. Nevertheless, we appeared to be harmless in our lunacy. She called her son, a fair-haired youth with blue eyes, and seemed pleased to observe that, like the English *señora*, he was blond and not swarthy. Fair-haired Basques are not very common.

A few miles below Ampuero is the village of Limpías, on the right bank of the Ason. The tide is felt as far up as this point, and a mile or so down the river expands to a beautiful estuary. We took train to Limpías one day, and fished upstream. It was bright and warm, with a glare on the water, and I only succeeded in hooking a few samlets.

The run below the bridge at Ampuero, for about a mile down, is full of good trout. I rarely failed to rise and catch fish in this length, which has a firm gravel bed and is free from overhanging boughs. Unfortunately, the hungry samlets will not allow the trout to take your flies on certain days, but these pests are not always on the feed.

With grief I relate that many good fish in this river and in others of Northern Spain are alive

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to-day through the fact that my small hooks would not hold them in their frenzied rushes in heavy water. Misled by the counsel that only the smallest flies and lightest casts will kill trout in Spanish rivers, I had brought a stock of brook-trout flies and fine gut for brown trout, and bigger flies and stouter casts for salmon and sea-trout. What I lacked was medium-sized blue duns, and these were not to be obtained in the country. Again and again big trout broke away from my tiny hooks, and twice I lost fish of over 3 pounds, after a painfully cautious humouring towards the net. Until fresh flies arrived from England I endured a dreary repetition of these defeats, and only in the interest of brother anglers do I point out the fact and the cause of failure. Catching a chalk-stream trout with a midge fly and a gossamer cast is one thing, but playing a two-pound Spanish trout with the same tackle in runs that almost carry you off your legs is a very different matter.

CHAPTER IV

A GOOD DAY

THE shrieks and groans of the ungreased axles of an ox-cart awoke me one morning during our stay on the Ason. I went on to the wooden balcony, and noted that the soil in the garden had been darkened by a night's rain. A soft westerly breeze was blowing. It was a fishing morning.

About nine o'clock we started up the river by the rough path on the right bank. The drenched earth had an aromatic scent. Birds were singing in the tender green of the foliage on the slopes. We sat down and put on our wading-stockings by the side of a long pool. A trout rose repeatedly under a bough near the bank, and I was impatient to throw a fly over him.

To-day I put on a medium cast, such as would scare a trout in the Derbyshire Wye or Dove, for I had suffered much through breakages of my

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fine-drawn gut. I saw the feeding trout rise once again, and with some difficulty I let my point blue dun swim down to the bough that dipped to the stream. There was a tiny dimple on the water, a tightening of the line, and I was playing a fish. He was soon beaten and brought to the net, a trout of about 10 ounces.

‘A good beginning,’ I said.

We proceeded about a quarter of a mile, and reached a run flowing into a swirling pool. The bank on our side was pebbly, and there were no trees to interfere with casting. On either side of the tumbling water were oily-looking glides. The river had an amber stain in it.

I began to cast, and very soon pricked a fish. Then came a grievous mishap. At the end of the run one of my droppers, an orange dun, was seized by a huge trout. When I struck he bounded into the air, a glorious yellow and brown fish, looking almost as big as a salmon. I gave him line, and he bored across the river towards the opposite bank. At this point in the fight he began to tug viciously. Something snapped. I wound in a limp line and muttered grimly. The fine gut of the orange dun had given way! Well, such is the uncertainty of human destiny! I had lost a

record trout. Perhaps he weighed 4 or 5 pounds. At the least he was a three-pound fish.

Meanwhile my wife had risen several trout and caught a small one. Evidently the trout were hungry. I lost no time, put on another fly, and cast again. And again, in a few seconds, I was playing a trout almost as heavy as the one that I had just lost. The fight was short and furious. I saw my fish roll over in the foaming water and disappear, while my line sank slack in the stream. At this second defeat I was too perturbed to even mutter. I sat down, took a sip of wine, and smoked a pipe of the coarse, dry Havana tobacco that they sell in Spain. Pipe-smokers are rare in that country.

Never mind: there are more trout in the run. Why not try them with a big fly? I found a partridge and green sea-trout fly in my book, and put this upon point. Casting upstream, I carefully worked the edges of the run. I may mention here that we always fished with the wet fly in these turbulent rivers. In a few minutes I was rewarded. A pretty pounder was in the net. I continued to cast in the same run, and in ten minutes or so I had netted six trout, varying in weight from $\frac{1}{2}$ pound to 1 pound. I also lost a pound fish.

The sea-trout fly did splendid execution that day. If ever I am fortunate enough to fish the Ason in a spring freshet, may I have a good store of the partridge and green with me! It killed more fish than all the March browns, blue duns, olive duns, and other flies, put together. The trout took it with a bang and a splash, and followed it with intense curiosity. Alas! I had but one of these flies in my book. I am not an advocate of that sometimes deadly lure called the Alexandra, but I fancy that the Ason trout would find it irresistible. The Devon minnow brought no success in this river, though I found it kill well in the León rivers. I rolled over one fish with the minnow in the Ason, but the trout seemed such free risers, in suitable weather, that I kept to the fly.

Samlets and smolts gave us very little trouble this day. The trout were in a charming humour for about three hours. Then the rise was over. I cannot account for the reason, but the fish ceased to feed, and during the afternoon we caught very few. The big run, where we had such a lively morning, is about two miles up, and is best fished from the left bank. It is not necessary to wade there. The bank is an ideal

casting-place. There is another fine stream, full of trout, just above the railway-bridge. It can be fished from either bank. On the left bank is a projecting rock above some circling deep water. Standing on this point, my wife and I caught several good trout one afternoon. While my wife was playing a fish, two caballeros hurried from the road across the strip of sward, and stood to watch the sport. They had never seen a woman fishing.

‘Bravo, bravo, señora!’ exclaimed one of the spectators, a handsome Basque of the swarthy type.

He applauded with his hands, and, raising his hat, made a graceful bow. My wife presented him with the trout which she had just netted. The caballero beamed, bowed again, and accepted the fish *con mucha gracias*. If he knew nothing of angling, he had learned how to carry a trout, for he cut a twig and inserted it in the fish’s gills and out at the mouth. It seems that fish are carried in this way in all parts of the globe, either upon a string or twig.

Upon this good day on the Ason we caught over two dozen trout, including eight or nine of about a pound in weight. I will say no more of

our lamentable losses of bigger fish. We also returned quite a dozen small trout to the water. Could we have afforded more time, I have no doubt that our sport on the Ason would have been far better. Just as we were beginning to know the river, it was time to move on to a fresh district. We had some hundreds of miles to travel during our tour, and, as we wished to gain a general view of delightful Spain, our sojourns were necessarily brief.

I saw no coarse fish in the Ason, except minnows. These are fairly common near Ampuero, and no doubt they help to fatten the big trout. The worst enemy of the fish of this grand river is man. Happily, the stream is mostly unnetable, but small nets doubtless work mischief in the tributaries in dry summers. Still, what a fine trout river it is! It is better than any ticket waters known to me in Great Britain, and can hold its own with many rented lengths of our noted rivers.

My opinion is that the Ason would rank high among the rivers of Europe if a system of intelligent preservation were adopted. Many English salmon-anglers would willingly pay the rent of the fine length at Ampuero only for rod fishing.

Fortunately, the Spanish law protects salmon during the spawning season, and also inhibits the abominable custom of killing the fish with dynamite. But there are too many nets, both in the estuary and, worse still, in the middle length of the river, while samlets are entirely unprotected. As it is, the chances of sport for the rod fisherman are fair, for with a heavy push of water netting is out of the question, and many fish get up the river during floods. If the salmon-fisher is on the spot at the right time, he may reckon on catching salmon below either of these weirs on this length of the Ason.

Permission was granted to me to fish for salmon on the condition that I gave up all fish taken. No angler could object to these terms, as the fishing costs nothing, and the sport is as good as one can expect in some highly-rented waters of the United Kingdom. Sea-trout begin to run in March, but they are not very plentiful. My Spanish friend, who, by the way, was the proud possessor of a complete rig-out of English tackle, said that he had taken sea-trout of 5 pounds. He also informed me that the biggest brown trout rise freely early in February, and during the first mild days he caught many good fish.

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Our success with the trout of the Ason would have been better if snow had not fallen and thawed on the mountains during our stay at Ampuero. The river was more or less tainted with snow-broth every day, and for one day it was in high flood and very turbid. Still, we enjoyed quite as good sport as one can hope for in English water with a high reputation, even under favourable atmospheric conditions. Whenever the sky was dull and the wind blowing from the west, the trout rose very readily to the fly. We seldom caught fish of less than 6 ounces, while half-pound fish could always be counted upon in any of the runs, and bigger trout were by no means scarce. I was glad to find that the meshes of the salmon-nets were large enough to allow trout up to $\frac{3}{4}$ pound to escape. It may be supposed that the nets account for many trout, but that is not the case. These strong trout frequent the heaviest streams of the river, which are never netted for salmon, and we caught our best fish in the roughest water.

The Ason is a beautiful river, recalling many romantic streams of Scotland and Wales. The river must be waded with caution. Some parts of the banks are very overgrown with tall, dense



A RUN ON THE ASON.

heath, alders, and briars, and certain runs are almost unapproachable. But there are many wide shallows which afford perfect water for the fly fisher. The whole length of the Ason is free to trout-anglers who provide themselves with a fishing license, costing 5 pesetas (about 3s.).

I gathered from the good people at the inn that there is excellent sea-fishing along the coast to the north and north-east of Ampuero. Santona, Laredo, and Castrourdiales, are little towns upon the sea, all within reach of the village. Ampuero and Marron are twin villages on the Ason between Bilbao and Santander. They are in the east of the rugged and well-watered province of Santander, amongst the Cantabrian Mountains.

I tried to buy some artificial flies in Bilbao. Fishing-tackle of a sort is to be purchased at a toy-bazaar in that town. I purchased a few flies from curiosity. They were of French make, big, and shockingly dressed. Each fly was mounted on a piece of cardboard, with its name printed beneath it, and the month of the year and time of the day when it would prove most fatal to trout. I have not used these flies. They might attract bass, and possibly unsophisticated chub. As to

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the time of the twenty-four hours when they would be most likely not to terrify trout, I should say between eleven and twelve on a dark, windy night. In discoloured water they might be possibly mistaken for small fry by an exceptionally hungry pike.

CHAPTER V

TROUT AND TRAVEL IN THE PROVINCE OF SANTANDER

WE were by this time growing accustomed to the ways of Spanish people. Patience and politeness are two qualities that the visitor to Spain should carefully cultivate. Do not suppose that the host of the hotel intends to slight you when he sends up your dinner an hour after the time at which it was promised. Punctuality is not considered a virtue of extreme importance in Spain ; therefore always allow plenty of time 'for grace.' Your train may start five minutes before the advertised time, or it may arrive half an hour later. It is a safe plan to be at the railway-station at least thirty minutes before the time announced for the departure of a train.

Before we had been many weeks in the country, we began to sympathize sincerely with those unhappy royal personages who endeavour to avoid

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the curiosity and the acclamations of crowds by travelling as plain Mr. Brown or Mrs. Smith. To use an Americanism, we were 'as good as a circus' to the rural folk. The chief interest centred in my wife, who was known as 'mujer pesca'—*i.e.*, fishing-woman; but, of course, I shared in the reflected glory. We encountered so much kindness and courtesy that it seems ungracious to complain of the amused curiosity which we aroused. I will say, however, that there are parts of the United Kingdom where a woman in wading-stockings would have to endure downright rudeness from the populace. 'Arry and his companions, when enjoying 'a jolly Bank Holiday' in their characteristic rational and refined manner, have even found my waders and fishing-hat a cause for loud and prolonged laughter.

If a woman wishes to sin by attiring herself in a costume adapted to the pursuit of angling, she will, on the whole, meet with more charity in Spain than in Great Britain. The reason is obvious. In the remoter regions of the Peninsula of Spain and Portugal, the apparition of a lady who wears a hat, a plain tweed skirt cut short, and boots with decent soles to them, is so ex-

tremely rare that wading-stockings and a fishing-rod only put the finishing touch, as it were, to an extraordinary guise. The sheer audacity of the wearer of such habiliments almost disarms rudeness of comment. It is terribly unconventional for the Spanish woman of the middle and upper classes to appear abroad without powdering her features. She may upon appropriate occasion wear a hat, if she is in the fashionable set, but it must be a floppy Parisian hat, and not one of the general utility type, such as British and American ladies wear while travelling in country parts.

An Englishwoman is, therefore, sure to be regarded as an eccentric personage, let her dress how she will. My wife and I wore boinas when we were fishing, but it was impossible to conceal the fact that we were foreigners. The very curs could not be tricked, and I believe that the grave, suffering, patient draught oxen, with their sagacious brown eyes, knew us at once for sham Basques.

It was sometimes necessary to observe a close secrecy concerning our movements. We preferred to fish where there was no risk of hooking an interested señora in her dusky hair, or playing a lively chico (boy) with a blue dun fast in his

blouse. One day when I was wading in the Ason, a lad watched me throw in several samlets. Presently he took off his boots, rolled up his trousers, and came up to within a few feet of where I was standing, begging me to give him the samlets. As he was an intelligent and keen boy, who sometimes fished with an enormously long home-made rod, I gave him my light, ten-foot fly-rod, and allowed him to fish the run. To his great enjoyment, he caught a small trout at the first cast, and getting amongst a shoal of samlets, he had lively sport for a few minutes. I endeavoured to instil a few ideas upon sportsmanlike angling into his callow mind, but I am afraid that he is still catching samlets for his mother's frying-pan.

The importunity of an old peasant man, who followed us one day, was somewhat annoying. He chiefly favoured my wife with his attentions, and whenever she hooked a samlet or undersized trout, the expression of his wrinkled countenance changed from hope to dread, and from dread to bitter chagrin, when she returned the fish to the river. 'Aqui, aqui!' (Here, here!) he cried, when a wriggling samlet was being taken from the hook. And, holding out both hands, he implored

the señora not to waste good fish by throwing them back into the river.

I noted in one of the Spanish newspapers that a shopkeeper of San Sebastian was prepared to supply customers with 'apparatus for the lawful taking of salmon.' This should be a sign that there are some fishermen in Spain who prefer the rod and line to poaching appliances for the capture of salmon. I hope their number will increase. The State is not yet alive to the advantages that would result from a more stringent enforcement of the *ley de pesca*, or fishing law. In a few years several of the overpoached rivers of Spain might be improved so as to excel almost any river in Great Britain. It would be difficult, in any country of the globe, to find finer natural conditions for the production of salmon, sea-trout, and brown trout, than in the Peninsula of Spain and Portugal.

Although nets of various kinds are employed in all the rivers, trout still teem in many of their lengths. The deep, strong Ason, for example, holds more fish than many streams in our own country, whereon the charge for a day's fishing is half a crown or five shillings. Even the Besaya and Saja, two rivers condemned by the authors of

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'Wild Spain,' still yield quite as good sport as one may expect to find in the average open, or even the ordinary ticket, water in England. This is not optimism, but plain evidence derived from the careful observation and experience of one who has fished in Wales, Yorkshire, Derbyshire, Devonshire, and Scotland, in streams good, bad, and indifferent. I think that, if the reader will bear with me to the end, he will agree that Spain has great fascination for the angler, and that when the people learn the real value of their splendid salmon and trout rivers, the country will be able to vie with Norway as a fishing-resort.

Our next river was the Besaya, which waters the central district of the province of Santander. At the little town of Torrelavega, where we stayed, the Besaya is joined by the Saja, the former river being called by the natives *el Rio Grande*, or the Big River. Trap nets are set in almost every run of these streams in the neighbourhood of Torrelavega, and big sweep nets are employed in the pools by the native pescadores. There are, however, stretches of heavy water that baffle the netsmen, and here it is possible to catch a few good trout with the fly or minnow. In one of

these runs I hooked a very big trout, which looked about 4 pounds in weight when it jumped from the water. But at the second rush it broke the gut of the dropper fly, and gained its freedom. The result of a day's steady fishing was meagre—seven trout from $\frac{1}{4}$ pound to $\frac{3}{4}$ pound. I may state that the weather was hot, the sky cloudless, and the river very clear. Still, the outlook is not very encouraging at Torrelavega, though the Besaya is worth a trial if it happens to lie on the fisherman's route to other waters. There is a decent fonda in the town, within ten minutes' walk of the confluence of the rivers. The host speaks French and a little English.

I must say, however, that we only spent two days at Torrelavega, and that both days were unsuitable for successful fly fishing. We are indoors at the time of the evening rise, when no doubt we might have taken a few more trout. In one of the pools of the Saja, I saw several big trout rising, and my wife hooked and lost a very big fish, possibly a salmon, in a swirling place between two rocks.

The river scenery in this locality is of a softer character than that of Ampuero; but it is far from tame, and the pueblo of Torrelavega is exceedingly

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picturesque. Higher up, these streams may be less harried by the netsmen. They have all the characteristics of trout rivers, and would probably repay exploration, and afford some baskets of fish early in the season. There appeared to be a large number of samlets in the Besaya.

From Torrelavega we went by rail to Renedo, a queer little village on the Rio Pas, which has a course parallel to that of the Besaya, and flows into the Bay of Biscay, a few leagues to the east of the latter river. Renedo is easily reached from Santander by the railway. I can speak highly of the Pas as a trout river. Both above and below Renedo the river abounds with trout. Fish are perhaps more abundant upstream than below the weir near the railway-bridge, but there is no scarcity of trout in any part of the stream that we visited. Quarter-pound trout swarmed on some of the shallows, and the big runs were full of fish up to 1 pound.

Our arrival with bags and fishing-rods created the same keen interest as that which attended our advent at other villages in Northern Spain. 'There is no inn here,' explained an obliging cavalry officer, who was waiting for the diligence which runs to a spa some leagues up the river.

At any rate, there was the prospect of a meal, for the station was provided with a small restaurant, so we sat down in the little room and ordered dinner. Thanks to the officer, the good dame, Amalia Macorra, who kept the fonda, was persuaded to give us a room in her house, and to supply us with meals at the station, an arrangement that served us admirably, and in spite of the asseverations of the cavalry Captain that we might expect the privations of a campaign, we were comfortably housed and well fed during our stay at Renedo.

The river was in half-flood and discoloured on the following day. I put on rather large flies, and soon began to rise trout. The first fish was a half-pounder, and several trout were in the bag before luncheon-time. We fished upstream, and came to some pretty shallows and runs full of fish, which were taking the newly-hatched blue duns very freely. The trout seemed more plentiful than in the Rio Ason, but they were smaller. We caught no trout over 10 ounces that day, though two or three heavier fish fought free in the rushing water. Although there were a few March browns over the water, any other artificial fly proved more attractive than our March browns.

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The deeply-stained water was not altogether favourable for fly fishing. For the first time in Spain, I determined to try thoroughly the worm on Stewart hooks. But we had no worms, and it was some time before I had collected about a dozen from the roots of a plant growing in a swamp. They were, of course, very soft and unclean. However, as soon as I dropped one of them into a run I felt a trout. He made a plucky struggle for a fish just over $\frac{1}{2}$ pound. Spanish trout are hard fighters, as I have already said.

Alas! had I possessed a bag of well-scoured red worms that afternoon, I am certain that our catch would have astonished Señora Macorra of the fonda. There was no doubt that the trout were 'on' worms. As quickly as I threw in, I hooked a trout on the Stewart hooks, baited with a very unpresentable grayish worm. At length I grew tired of grubbing up roots with my fingers to search for bait, so the fly cast was again attached to the line, and we sought an undisturbed length of the river.

Absolute loneliness favoured us this day. The folk of Renedo were holding their Sunday fiesta, and dancing to the pipe in the village. The

day was dull, and clouds drooped to the distant mountains. We took a rest at mid-day by a lovely bend of the Pas, where the river was broken by islets and rocks. Birds were singing all around. Now and then a trout jumped from the water. The river was losing its muddy stain, and changing to a tint of amber.

In one swift, narrow run I both caught and lost several good trout. It was an enjoyable day, and the trout were plentiful and in a rising mood. Towards evening an old man joined us. I could understand but little of his dialect, but he drank a glass of our wine, and apparently tendered advice upon fishing. We nodded, pantomimed, and expressed good fellowship, and then the old fellow disappeared among the underwood. I was sorry that dinner called us away from the charming river and the rising trout.

CHAPTER VI

THE RIVER AT RENEDO

UPON our return to the fonda one evening, we were visited by the village doctor, who informed us that he fished for trout with the fly, and appeared anxious that we should have good sport upon the next day. From the friendly medico we learned that a fair number of salmon ascend the Pas in the spring, and that English anglers from the coast towns occasionally visit Renedo for the salmon-fishing. He had taken salmon with the rod, but they were small, the average weight being about 8 pounds. We saw no signs of salmon during our expedition, although the doctor stated that there were fish below the weir by the railway-bridge.

There are fewer nets in this part of the Pas than in the lower reaches of the Ason, but we saw both boats and nets ready for use in the bigger pools. On some of the shallows there are traps for trout,

built up of loose stones in a horseshoe shape, with a small inlet. A few trout enter these traps, and are scooped out with a poke-net, or driven into an open sack stretched across the inlet ; but the traps work comparatively little mischief, and they are not numerous. The Pas is a productive river for trout, and the length at Renedo contains a quantity of fish. The river-banks are less rough than those of the Ason, and wading is practicable almost everywhere, except in time of flood.

Our best day on the Pas was in the fine reach of broken water about two miles downstream from Renedo. Here the trout are bigger, and some three-quarter-pounders, that rose madly to the fly, gave us excellent sport for a couple of hours. In this part of the river we caught no fish of less than $\frac{1}{2}$ pound. The afternoon was sunny and warm, and it was necessary to use fine tackle and to fish far off. On a cloudy day in spring-time these runs ought to yield a fine basket of trout. There is also some pretty fly water close to the railway-bridge.

The river widens in a broad strath below the weir. There are gravelly shoals for some distance, then a series of deep pools and another weir. Below this second weir are some islands, and the

stream is divided into several sharp rapids. There are big trout in these runs. I was broken by a fish in the first of them, on the right bank, and here I took trout up to $\frac{3}{4}$ pound apiece. The olive dun was the favourite fly, a fair-sized one of the winged pattern.

These waters are almost too big in the spring for small hackle flies, such as one would use in the Wharfe or Ure. Hackles will be found serviceable later on in the season, when the rivers are lower and the water fine. In March and April you need flies that can be seen by the trout amid the broken water of these impetuous and powerful rivers.

The scenery of the Pas gains in beauty as it leaves the strath for a narrower dale below the second weir, which is about two miles from Renedo. There are but few houses near the river. Field-labourers, men and women, looked up from their work as we passed by. They greeted us with a 'Con dios!' ('God be with you!') or with a steady gaze of wonderment. Who were these strange people, with leggings and fishing-rods, who suddenly appeared at the riverside? No doubt we afforded them a subject for speculation and discussion.

At one run we were having plenty of rises, till a peasant rode his horse through the middle of it and scared away every trout within a hundred yards. In this length I caught a smolt in his sea spangles, but samlets were less attentive to our flies on the Pas than on the Ason and Bidasoa. We made no trial with the artificial minnow in this river. Who would spin when trout can be lured with the fly? But I fancy that a gilt Devon would tempt a fair number of good trout from those little eddies among the rocks.

We saw very few rises on the Pas. This counts for little, however, for there are many well-stocked rivers whereon one notes scarcely a rise an hour during certain seasons of the year.

One evening we were entertained by the station-master, who sang us Basque songs to the accompaniment of his guitar. Our hostess and her family danced in the characteristic fashion of the district, and every effort was made to render the visit of 'los Ingleses' enjoyable. Any angler who makes a fishing visit to the North of Spain during the spring months should not neglect Renedo on the Pas. The lodging is not luxurious, but the hostess is an excellent cook, and the boarding terms are only 5 pesetas a day, including wine

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and coffee. The salmon and trout fishing is free, but the chances in favour of catching salmon are not high.

The cavalry officer said that there were trout to be caught all the way up the river. Judging by the number of fish in the Renedo length, it may be safe to say that trout are quite as plentiful further up the stream, for the country is thinly populated, and netsmen do not appear to ply their business as diligently as the pescadores of the Besaya and Saja.

Often, when we laid down our rods and sought the shade of the trees by the brawling river, we compared the scene with familiar valleys in Scotland and Wales. How curiously scenery repeats itself in different quarters of the earth! I have read that there are stretches of hill and dale in Central Africa which recall the district of the Brecon Beacons in South Wales. Here and there an orange-tree or a vine reminded us that we were in the genial South; but the pine-clad slopes, the waving osiers, the rustling aspens, the river racing between ferny banks, the song of the blackbird, and a flight of blue duns over the stream, lent all the details of a mind picture of dearly-loved haunts in our own country.

The climate of Northern Spain is not wholly unlike that of Great Britain. There is more sunshine, that goes without saying ; still, in one week during March we experienced noon heat that was truly sultry, heavy rain, and a thunderstorm, while snow fell upon the highlands. Such variety should satisfy even an Englishman. But who shall describe the sunshine of Spain? Even in this northern region the atmosphere is steeped with golden sunlight, and the sky is of the deeper blue which we only see in the height of an unusually fine summer.

No smoke canopy hangs over the towns. The thin blue vapour from wood and charcoal fires rises almost imperceptibly. Even in populous Seville, you must needs look for smoke if you would note it from the highest stage of the Giralda Tower. The aspect of London, when we returned to the rechy city after six months of smokeless, pure sunshine, was almost one of gloom and twilight, even on a fine day.

It rains heavily in Spain, for which one is thankful in the hot months. We were soaked to the skin more than once in the Basque provinces. In half an hour the river was in spate ; the red, marly roads were thick with slush, and the

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runnels came down the hillsides in turbid torrents. Sometimes the sun peeped out while the rain was falling; then wonderfully vivid rainbows spanned the river valley.

Fishermen, like farmers, are addicted to complaints against the weather. I often wished that it would rain, when day after day closed with a red sunset, betokening a morrow of brilliant sunshine. A glittering day in England is not in the favour of the fly fisherman. In Spain it is almost impossible to take trout during a dazzling noon. Up to ten in the morning there is the chance of catching a few fish during such weather; but it is as well to emulate the Spanish example, and to enjoy a siesta at mid-day. The evening rise at the close of a hot day is frequently a fruitful time.

The rivers of Spain are subject to sudden floods, or *avenidas*. This is especially the case in Andalusia, where the rain is often tropical. In the North, and in the mountainous districts generally, the streams rise rapidly after heavy rains; but they soon subside, and while they are fining down, trout frequently exhibit great eagerness in taking the fly. The worm fisher, with his coarse line and clumsy rod, has his opportunity when the streams are in spate. Minnow fishing is not practised

among the native anglers. 'Creepers' and the live stone-fly are used by a few pescadores of the kingdom of León and in Galicia.

At Renedo we were free from the attentions of the small crowds that occasionally accompanied us at Ampuero. One day a priest displayed a languid interest in our operations, but he soon retired, with a pitying smile upon his features. Upon another occasion, as we were wading from the islets to which I have referred, I noticed three men, with a big, savage-looking dog, awaiting us upon the bank. The men were not ruffians, though their appearance was that of stage brigands. They were herdsman, with olive-wood staves, upon which they leant in a picturesque pose.

Not a word was uttered by them as we struggled through the swift water. As we scrambled up the bank the dog emitted a menacing growl. But a word from one of the peasants silenced him. And with courteous bows the men inquired if we had caught many truchas. I showed them the contents of the bag, and they nodded, and examined our flies with much interest. After a short parley they bowed again, and we went on our way.

I was told before leaving England that it was

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folly to go without a revolver in the rural districts of Spain. As it was, I neglected the counsel, and upon no occasion was there the least need for such a means of protection. There may be an element of danger in travelling through the rough, unbeaten regions, especially if one has an imperfect knowledge of the language and the habits of the people. Twice we were stoned from a distance while we were fishing. The first time that this happened was at Oyeregui. A lad on the road had begged for a centimo, and we had ignored his prayer. We descended a wooded slope to the river and began to fish. Presently stones came hurtling and crashing amongst the underwood. None of the missiles touched us. I scrambled up the slope in pursuit of our invisible assailant. Before I gained the road the boy had disappeared entirely.

At Matarosa, on the Sil, we were pelted with stones flung by a couple of muleteers on the road. Our guide, who was not with us at the time, described this conduct as mere playfulness. He explained that fishermen are a laughing-stock in Spain, and that it is considered an excellent joke to throw stones into the river close to where they are fishing. I know, from my own experience, that this boorish diversion is not altogether

unheard of in Great Britain. There is a singular likeness between the louts of all nations of the West.

These annoyances were trivial, and are scarcely worth mentioning. The spontaneous kindness that we experienced from the peasants vastly outweighs the instances of discourtesy. Beggars are a pest throughout Spain, but they are far less troublesome in the country than in the towns. Now and then our tips (*propinas*) for services rendered were refused by poor folk, and they were always accepted gracefully by those who felt themselves entitled to remuneration. A polite salutation and the gift of a cigar will often insure you willing assistance in this country of courtesy. A present of trout is always valued. In Portugal we bartered an artificial fly for a quantity of fresh ripe cherries. The lad who proposed the exchange was delighted with his bargain.

It would be good policy on the part of the English fisherman to carry a surplus supply of artificial flies with him. The offer of a few moscas will win the heart of the local piscador, whose advice as to the haunts of trout may be of much service, and prove a saving of time. A northern Spaniard, or a Castilian, will not abuse

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your kindness. He is a man of his word, with the virtue of impulsive generosity. If he likes to receive, he is also fond of giving. Treat him as a caballero, and he will serve you out of pure good-nature. When you leave the place, there will be the sincerity of real regret in his handshake and good-bye.

CHAPTER VII

TWO DAYS ON THE GUADALQUIVIR

AFFAIRS unrelated to angling obliged us to spend some time in the sunny southern capital of Seville. It was well on in the month of April, and already the heat and the mosquitoes of Andalusia proved somewhat trying. The atmospheric contrasts in Spain are remarkable. We encountered all sorts of weather in the North, from snow-showers to thunderstorms. In Seville the days were hot, under the glittering blue of the matchless Andalusian sky. Once or twice we had showers, and then the rain roared down from purple clouds, and flowed in turbid rivulets along the street gutters.

When a lull came in our busy inspection of the city's monuments and works of art, my thoughts turned to 'the sport sae entrancing.' I knew little or nothing about the fish of the Guadalquivir. Richard Ford, in 'Murray's Handbook for Spain,'

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refers, I believe, to the shad of that brown, swirling river. We had shad at the hotel, and the head-waiter said that it came from the Rio Guadalquivir.

'Can one catch shad with the rod and line?' was my reflection, as we roamed one afternoon in the shady promenade by the river.

Pescadores with big nets were at work on the flood right under the Golden Tower, and before long I saw one of these men catch a silvery fish, which probably weighed a couple of pounds. Continuing my ramble, I observed a rod fisherman seated at the waterside. He had a long, heavy bamboo rod, a line of coarse cord, and a short length of thick gut armed with a big hook. His bait was a piece of cooked meat. He was not a communicative mortal. When I asked him if there were many fish in the river, he replied, 'Poco' (Few).

Further on I met another angler with the same primitive tackle and a morsel of meat for a bait. 'Poco' was also his formula. Then I noticed two rowing-skiffs coming down the stream, on either side of it. Presently the men in these boats began to haul up a sort of cross-line made of thickish rope. The line bristled with big hooks,

and attached to one of them was a shad of about a pound. This curious mode of fishing is common on the Lower Guadalquivir. It does not seem to be highly profitable, for I saw very few shad taken by this method. However, the pescadores spend long days in drifting down the river, dragging the sunk cross-line behind their skiffs.

Chance threw us one afternoon into a meeting with a young Spaniard, who keeps a little refreshment-booth on the quay, where the ships for England are loaded with iron ore. José is his name, a dark-haired, olive-skinned fellow, in white drill clothes and a cap. He speaks English, and so does his handsome younger brother.

José served us with lemonade, and began to chat in our own language. He had been a sailor, and had touched several British ports.

‘Good country, England ; much gold !’ he said, showing his white teeth when he smiled.

‘Fish in the river ?’

‘Yes, some, but more lower down,’ replied José. ‘You like to catch them, I go with you in boat one day.’

I closed with the offer, and we arranged to fish upon the following Sunday morning, that being José’s holiday. José promised to provide a boat

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and some bait. We were to meet him at his pavilion at six o'clock.

On Sunday we left the hotel for the rendezvous with José. I carried two rods and the bag, and my wife had the landing-net. We were conspicuous objects for the mirth of those Sevillian citizens who were abroad at that early hour. Loud guffaws saluted our approach, and a merry party in an open carriage gave vent to explosions of derisive laughter. What in the name of Santa Maria were those mad English people about to do?

The morning was heavy, the air moist and still. There was a sweet scent of orange-blossom. In the brushwood bordering the Guadalquivir hosts of nightingales were singing. José greeted us. He could not leave his booth. However, his brother was ready to accompany us. No, he had not found any worms, but there were plenty in the plantation of orange-trees. We poked about with a borrowed fork, and found sundry big lobworms. Then José junior bargained with a boatman for the hire of a huge leaky tub, with enormous oars. We put off, and rowed down the river to some stakes forming a breakwater to protect the soft banks of reddish earth. Here young José

moored the tub. I put on a paternoster, with three hooks baited with lobes. A rather heavy lead was necessary in this strong current. My wife tried a float tackle.

Half an hour passed without a twitch to our lines. Young José entertained us with stories of his experiences aboard British ships. An hour went by, and still no bites.

‘Big fish here,’ remarked José junior.

‘I wish they would bite,’ said I.

A cloud burst over us. The rain came down with a loud patter on the boat. My wife and our gilly sought what protection they could find against the downpour.

‘Fish no eat?’ asked José junior, when the rain ceased.

‘No,’ I answered.

‘We go other place,’ suggested our young friend.

So we moved down a few hundred yards and tried another swim. The nightingales sang louder after the shower, and the orange-blossom was more odorous. Our lad begged a fifty-yard length of water-cord that I had in the bag.

‘I show you how catch fish,’ he said.

He tied on several eyed hooks, baited them,

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attached a heavy lead to the line, and let it sink near some piles.

‘Wait little while, and you see,’ observed José junior.

We waited perhaps an hour. Meanwhile no shad attacked our baits.

‘Me see now,’ said the boy.

He pulled in the line. Every hook was bare, but there were no shad upon any of them.

José junior rebaited the hooks and flung in the line. The next time he hauled it in some of the hooks were again bare.

‘Dam!’ said the lad.

My wife then reminded me that we had not eaten much breakfast. It was time to return to the hotel. We rowed the clumsy junk back against the stream, paid the boatmen and young José, and left the riverside. Our progress through the streets again provoked the sallies and mirth of the people. I was not favourably impressed with the Sevillian manners.

‘Nada?’ (Nothing?) said the waiter.

I shook my head. He smiled and brought our soup. No doubt he thought it well that we were not dependent upon the spoil of our rods for luncheon.

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George Borrow, who spent some time in Seville, indulges in a rhapsody on the beauties of the city when viewed from the banks of the Guadalquivir. There is, perhaps, a note of exaggeration, an artist's overtone, in Borrow's high-flown diction, and the confession that the scene moved him to 'tears of rapture.' Still, the brown river has its charm, even in its course between Seville and the transpontine suburb of Triana. Lower down, where the banks are thickly grown with bushes, the river is more beautiful, but the wide levels on either side are of a featureless character, and the muddy shores at low-tide do not pleasurably attract the eye.

On the right bank of the Guadalquivir is the little town of Coria, which lies among orange orchards under a rocky bluff. A small steamboat, which starts daily from the Triana Bridge, or Puente de Isabel II., makes the journey to Coria in about two hours. The boat returns in the evening of the same day. José senior advised us to try the fishing at Coria. He said that many Sevillians went there on holidays to fish with the line.

We started before the sun was high, on a lovely May morning. José was at the landing-stage.

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While we were waiting for the boat to start, we saw two netsmen haul in a net containing one small shad. The sky was a glorious blue, and the sun's rays were warm. Although we steamed at a fair pace out of Seville, the heat was considerable in spite of the swift motion through the morning air. On, between banks of verdure, the little steamboat panted down to the first pier. A merchant vessel, making for the port of Seville, passed us, and we saw several pescadores at work with their nets. On we steamed upon the broad turbid river.

José said we could obtain plenty of worms for bait at Coria. When we landed at the curious little pueblo, which is inhabited almost entirely by gipsies, we enlisted the services of a pair of bronze-skinned Romany urchins, who were soon grubbing for worms in a damp ditch near the river. A tribe of children followed us to the shore of the Guadalquivir. They stood a few yards away while we made our preparations for bottom fishing. Then a man came, and began to put questions to José about us. He was much interested in my wife's hat. Such headwear had never been seen in Coria, where the working women do not even put on a mantilla.

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I fastened a leger to my running line, and baited the hook with a big worm. We fished a small bay, between two wooden breakwaters. The tide was ebbing, and the muddy verge of the river began to show. It was not long before I felt a pluck at the line. I struck, but there was no fish on the hook. The bait had been gnawed. My wife also felt several nibbles at her bait. Were we at last amongst a shoal of shad? Niggling bites followed in quick succession, but when we struck, the lines came back slack.

José was of the opinion that little fish were playing with our baits. I proposed another pitch, and we went into the underwood, and followed a grassy path through the scanty but grateful shade. This was one of the hottest of days that we experienced in Andalusia. The fiery sun scorched our faces and hands to soreness of the skin, and made my wife feel faint. A glazed heat was upon the water, and a haze of fire quivered on the land. We clambered on to the slippery stakes of a breakwater, and threw in our legers. The children still formed a retinue. They annoyed José. 'If you will not go away,' said he, 'I'll hit you over the head, and then throw you in the river.' The threat had its effect upon the juveniles.

They retreated, uttering a few impertinences. Presently a man in a seedy uniform, with a sword at his side, pushed through the bushes and conversed with José. Our gilly explained that the man was a river-keeper on the watch for smugglers and other offenders.

Where were the shad? Not a nibble rewarded our patient endurance of the fierce heat. My wife retired to the shade. José reclined with his head under a bush. At last I felt a tug, then another, and another. I struck with force, and felt a responsive jerk. The fish began boring, and I gave him line. Then he made for the piles, and I had to check him. I called to José for the landing-net. In a second his head was out of the bush, and he came at a perilous run along the beams of the slimy breakwater.

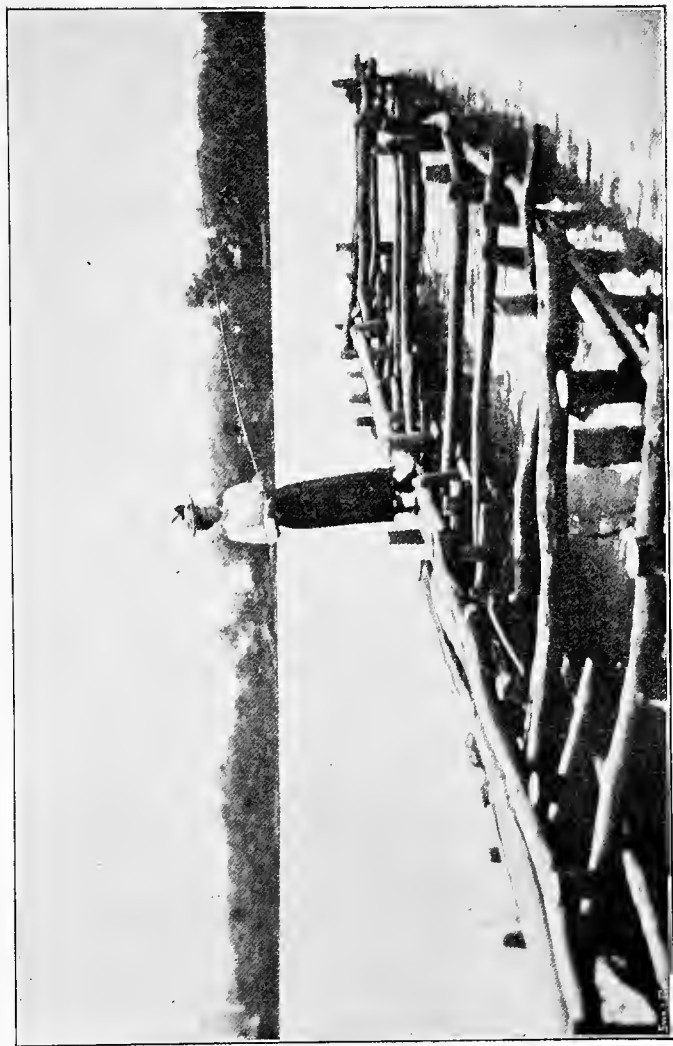
‘I get him!’ he cried, hanging head downwards and brandishing the net.

‘Quietly, quietly!’ I said, reeling in the line.

I saw a swirl on the water. José made a wild plunge with the net, swore in English, and missed the fish.

‘Now, then!’ I said, as something silvery showed near the surface.

This time José made better aim and netted the



A BREAKWATER ON THE GUADALQUIVIR.

fish. In doing so, he nearly took a header into the muddy water. It was an eel, a wriggling, slimy beast of about 2 pounds. Fortunately, he had not gorged the hook. We soon freed him, and put on a fresh bait. My wife faced the heat again, and went on to another breakwater.

‘You catch more now,’ said the sanguine José.

I soon felt another twitch at the line. Was it a shad this time? I could not say, for I missed the fish.

A boy came down the river in a rowing-boat. He sang a loud, monotonous air, with a sort of prolonged guttural trill. It was quaint, if not musical.

José laughed contemptuously.

‘Spanish singing,’ he remarked. ‘No good!’

This fishing in the Guadalquivir was certainly a new experience. The sport was undoubtedly indifferently; but we enjoyed the afternoon, in spite of the hot sun. Only small eels came to hand after the first capture. As for the shad, they stubbornly refused our dainties in the way of cold meat and lobworms. We reeled up at about five o’clock, and José and I smoked our cigarettes under the bushes, while my wife photographed a bright, picturesque family group of Andalusians, who were

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picking up sticks for fire-lighting. They were delighted to stand for their portraits.

In the cool of the evening we returned in the steamboat to Seville. The setting sun gave a golden tone to the tawny river. Nightingales warbled from the banks. At one of the wooden piers an Englishman and his wife came aboard. There was no mistaking the gentleman's nationality. He unfolded that eminently insular sheet, the *Daily Mail*, and pored over it till we came in sight of the Golden Tower.

I gave the eel to José. It was already half baked by the sun, and looked like one of those dried fish that one sees in the foreign comestible shops in Soho. As we crossed the quay, an officer with a sword pounced upon us, and demanded an inspection of the fishing-bag. I opened it, displaying the tackle. He bowed, and flourished his arm. There was nothing dangerous nor dutiable in the tan haversack. We were neither Anarchists nor contrabandists. Pursued by the giggles of señoritas out for their evening parade, we walked to the Fonda de la Victoria in the Plaza de San Fernando.

'Hambre' (Hunger), I said to the obliging head-waiter.

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‘Oll right,’ he answered, uttering the only English words that he knew, and hurrying with the plates.

After dinner we confessed to a Spanish gentleman, who was in the lounge of the vestibule, that we felt tired.

‘Tired!’ he said in Spanish, with a laugh. ‘Tired—impossible! English people are *never* tired.’

CHAPTER VIII

FROM ANDALUSIA TO CASTILE

DOES the Guadalquivir contain no other fish save shad and swarms of eels? Surely there must be plenty of fish in those long, unfrequented reaches of swirling, umber-coloured water between Cordova and Seville. I looked from the window of the railway-carriage upon the Moorish Wâd-al-Kebîr, and the Bætis of the Romans, that curious, muddy, Oriental-looking river winding, sometimes slowly, between banks of yellow soil, or washing pebbly shores as it spread itself over the shallows with a swifter flow. One would not have experienced great surprise at the spectacle of a crocodile sunning itself on one of those beaches. The cold, sad cactus showed here and there on the banks. And at the approach of the rumbling train storks took wing slowly from the lonely pools.

On either side spread the olive-groves up to the rocky spurs of the wild sierras. The rail-track

was gay for miles with myriads of scarlet poppies. We were going to Castile, land of wide plains, desolate mountains, and forests of ilex. The region of Andalusia, with its perennial sunshine, orange-gardens, and waving fields of wheat, was behind us before twilight, and the cooler air of the gray-green, shadeless plains blew through the windows of the carriage. Upon these great flats herds of fighting bulls stood out distinctly in the fading light. The beasts grazed contentedly; the herdsman, with his striped shawl upon the shoulders and a conical felt hat upon his head, listlessly watched the passing train. We were in Don Quixote's country—sun-burned, wind-searched La Mancha.

I shall not here describe wonderful Toledo, with its ancient walls, noble cathedral, and alleys of sombre houses, where one looks for romance and adventure at every turn. We laid our rods aside at Toledo. There are fish in the Tagus, or Rio Tajo, that flows deep down in a rocky ravine below the city. I saw nets, and I noticed men with fishing-rods perched on the rocks. The river is turbid, like the Guadalquivir. Below the city it spreads out, and curves through a scorched plain dotted with a few trees.

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An Englishman at our boarding-house could give me very little information about the fish in the Tagus. He knew that there were fish in the river; they were big and edible, and he had tasted them. Perhaps they are shad. We were not very keen upon another essay of paternostering for shad.

It was May when we arrived in Avila. This weird and fascinating town is nearly 4,000 feet above the sea-level, on the slope of a rocky upland. We reached Avila at midnight, and the air was frosty. The cold pierced us after the semi-tropical warmth of the South. We shivered in the long stone corridors of the hotel, which suggested a Castilian palace, whence the glory of old days had long departed. How keen blew the north-easter across the plain from the sierras! Even when the sun was high, and the great green lizards, longer than one's arm, crept out to bask, there were teeth in the breeze that whistled among the rocks of this exposed tableland.

The little Adaja glides in a silvery streak through the only strip of fresh green which can be seen from the ancient walls of the town. We found our way to the river. It was clear, on a sand and gravel bed, with weeds here and there, and sharps that looked like the haunts of trout. Such a swift,

clean little stream ought to produce fish of the *Salmo* family. One afternoon I left the hotel with my fly-rod. No one was abroad. It was the time of siesta. I made my way to the glittering river, and arranged my tackle, putting on a fine cast and one little hackle fly. Scour after scour was carefully cast over, and every likely corner tried. I had no rises, and saw not a sign of a fish. The river was perfect ; only the fish were wanting.

Presently I came to a mill and an overflow. It was a pleasant spot for a lounge. I filled my pipe, and reclined on a sward, watching the racing stream, the goats that nibbled the herbage, the woman washing linen, and the distant walls and towers of the marvellously beautiful town. Then I fell asleep. So passed the first and only day of attempted fishing at Avila.

There are no trout in this part of the Adaja. If you want plenty of trout and cheap quarters in a wild, mountainous district, inquire of the landlord of the Fonda del Inglés, who will give you particulars about the coach journey and the accommodation. I met two Castilian fishermen on the Adaja. One was a postman. He brought letters to the fonda, and I gave him an English roach float. His own float, like the rest of his

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tackle, was rude, and highly insulting to any self-respecting fish.

I accompanied these pescadores one afternoon. They were dignified, courtly Castilians, with a fellow-feeling for a brother of the rod. I did not trouble to bring my own tackle, for the dace of the Adaja average about ten to the pound, and do not appear to abound. Yet these anglers were extremely keen. They tramped miles to and from their swims, and seemed well pleased if they returned with three or four brace of these diminutive dace. Their bait-box was a curious entomological surprise packet—an olla-podrida. It contained worms, grubs, caterpillars, beetles, and live flies. They fished the little eddies near the banks, where the water was about 2 feet in the deepest part. One of them had a cotton-reel on a nail for a winch, and his line was thick enough to tow a punt. The gut was 'medium salmon,' and the floats fashioned out of goose-quill and bottle-corks.

Honest anglers! I respect them. They fished for a love of the sport, and not for the larder. Who could dream of the larder when the basket never contained anything but a few fish of medium sardine size? No, they were true fishermen:

patient, observant, fond of the open air and the riverside. They deserved a better stream for the pursuit of their simple and wholesome recreation. I can see them now. One was a stout man in a frogged coat, with fur collar and cuffs, and a sombrero. The postman was tall and thin, with a sober, olive-tinted countenance. We soon became amigos. I felt flattered. It is a great credit to one to be accepted as the friend of a native of Old Castile.

Everyone in Avila has an air of romance. Remember that this is a town of Old Castile, where Romans conquered, Moors came into possession, and Christians finally prevailed.

It is the birthplace of the remarkable Santa Teresa. The very beggars are proud Castilians in their mien. I often dream of Avila. It is a wonderful place. But you need not unpack your fishing-tackle until you reach the mountain streams beyond the valley of the Adaja.

CHAPTER IX

STREAMS IN LEÓN

AFTER several weeks spent in sight-seeing in the towns, we continued our peregrination northwards to the district that may be described as the Scotland of Spain. We left the dry heat of the central plains for the mists, rain-showers, and cooler atmosphere of the wild and beautiful kingdom of León. The chief province of the kingdom bears the same name, and in it is the ancient city also called León. In the north-east this province juts to that of Santander, and on the east it is bordered by Palencia, while to the north lies the kingdom of Asturias, oddly misnamed 'the Asturias' by some English writers.

León is mountainous on the west and north. From the capital southwards and eastwards the country is of a fairly level character, watered by the Orbigo, the Esla, and numerous minor streams. Most of the rivers of the mountain

districts contain trout, and there are some lakes at a high altitude which abound with heavy fish. These lagunas are not easy of access. They are far up among the peaks, but some of them can be approached by pack-mules. It is necessary to carry a camping outfit, for there are no habitations near to the tarns providing accommodation for the stranger. I have met one angler who has spent a pleasant time in these solitudes, where days pass without the sound of a human voice. Bears still range almost unmolested upon these sierras, and wolves and wild-cats are by no means scarce. In severe winters wolves have been known to range almost to the gates of the city of León. The best time for fishing in the lakes of Northern Spain is from June to August, when the snow has melted upon the lower slopes. Snow crowns all the higher summits throughout the year.

We crossed the Douro, and by a slow and tedious railway-journey travelled to the north-eastern corner of León. Lofty mountains are reared in savage peaks and ridges above the rocky slopes of the river valleys in this remote territory. The Peñas de Europa rise to a height of nearly 9,000 feet, and the Peña Espiguete and the Prieta

are almost as high. These peaks are only rivalled in loftiness among the Spanish mountains by two or three summits in the Pyrenees.

Most of the rivers of the well-watered kingdom of León flow in a southerly direction, and join the wide Douro. A typical Leónese river is the tributary that rises in the Asturian Mountains and waters a narrow hill valley down to the little town of Boñar, on the railway from Bilbao to the city of León. The journey from Bilbao is slow but highly interesting, as the train makes many curving ascents, and runs along the slopes of wild mountains, across gorges, and through charming glens. We came to Boñar, by way of León, on a day of great heat. Upon our arrival a polite native of the town offered to escort us to the hotel. Leaving our baggage to be brought on in a cart, we accompanied the stranger, who proved to be the landlord of the principal inn. He gave us such a good account of the trout-fishing in the neighbourhood that we were inclined to suspect him of drawing the long-bow.

While dinner was being prepared the sky darkened, and there were distant growls of thunder. I went out to look at the river, which was rather low and extremely clear. In a shallow

pool below the bridge I noticed several trout rising, and wished that I had brought my rod with me. A number of flies were sporting over the water, and in spite of the thundery weather the fish were feeding hungrily. In ten minutes I saw at least thirty rises in this single pool.

My observations were interrupted by a sudden downfall of rain. A cloud had drooped to the hill-tops on either side of a fine gorge, and overhead the purple pall was riven with a streak of forked lightning, followed by an alarming crash of thunder. I retreated hurriedly for the inn. When I reached the plaza the rain was running in rivulets through the street, and the violence of the storm had increased. During such tempests as this the village priests of this district sometimes ascend the towers of the churches and pray to Santa Barbara to still the thunder and to stay the disastrous lightning strokes.

As we dined upon the usual omelettes, steak, cheese, and oranges, the rain pelted down, flooding the road 2 inches deep, and filling the brook with foaming, turbid water. In the morning the heat had returned. At eight o'clock the sun was shining fiercely, and the sky was cloudless.

Was there any hope of sport with the fly upon such a brilliant day? I remembered those rises in the pool by the bridge. The river seemed full of trout, and I longed to try my skill with them. We held council, and decided to go fishing. A chico was soon found to act as our gilly. He was a bright lad of about fourteen, in a boina, a canvas blouse, and canvas shoes braided with blue worsted. We gave him the wading-stockings and brogues, and he led the way with an air of importance, with his chin well up, exhibiting pride in the performance of a new and mysterious duty.

Our hostess had given us a luncheon of hard-boiled eggs, meat, bread and cheese, and the usual pint of wine. We attracted but little notice in the street. At the riverside our chico surveyed us with solemn curiosity as we put on our wading-stockings and made ready our tackle. Two old men stared at us from the bridge.

At the first sight of the river I realized that fishing was almost hopeless. The storm had brought down a flood from the mountains. The slow pool, where I had seen the trout rising on the previous evening, was like a rapid, and the water was a dark yellow colour. We began to spin

Devon minnows in the eddies close to the bank, and fished upstream till we came into the gorge. Neither of us touched a trout. Then we tried the worm on Stewart tackle, and finally, towards evening, when the water had cleared somewhat, we put on our fly casts. One diminutive fish of the boga variety rewarded our steady perseverance. I shall have more to say of bogas anon. They are a kind of dace.

The chico shouldered our traps, and strode off to the town. He apparently experienced a contempt for us, and for our foreign notions of fishing. But he gratefully acknowledged his silver coin, and went off triumphantly with the remains of the luncheon. The landlord was sympathetic. 'Dios! how could one expect to catch fish with the river in such flood? But patience! to-morrow we would be well rewarded.' In the clubroom adjoining the inn I was subjected to a close questioning after dinner. Why had I come to this out-of-the-way corner of Spain? Was I prospecting for mines, like all the English? Did I sell my fish? If not, why did I spend so many hours in fishing? Did the water penetrate those things I wore on my legs? etc. A gentleman who was staying in this mountain retreat for his

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health advised me to use the worm, and shook his head at my flies. All the pescadores of this part used the worm. A priest who was among the company expressed the hope that I was a good Catholic, and asked me many quaint questions about England.

After dinner we went for a ramble up a rough lane leading to the mountains. Thunder was again brewing. The clouds were purple, edged with copper, and the air heavy and oppressive. It was the worst kind of weather for fishing. Presently a few big drops of rain fell; then thunder rumbled in the distance. Before we reached the fonda forked green lightning was darting in the clouds that lowered upon the mountain-peaks. It was a grand sight. But the disturbed condition of the atmosphere boded ill for sport with the rod.

On the morrow the river was in better order. The weather was still bright, and the heat almost too great for fishing during the hours between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. I saw plenty of trout rising, but my flies would not tempt many of them. Better fortune awaited us in the evening. A fresh breeze sprang up at sunset, and the sky grew cloudy. The fish began to feed with a

furious hunger. A shallow which had seemed deserted by trout in the early part of the day was now ringed all over with rises. Every cast brought a tug at the flies, and though the trout were as nimble in dropping the fly as they were in seizing it, we had an exciting time until darkness set in. The length of the stream close to the town at Boñar appeared swarming with trout that evening. I did not see a better rise after sunset on any other Spanish river.

We kept a lookout for nets, horseshoe traps, and other indications of fishing, at Boñar, but saw nothing that would lead one to suppose that the trout are thinned out by these means. There is a professional fisherman in the little pueblo, who appears to make a living by catching trout with the rod and line. He is a bottom fisher, like the majority of those who fish to sell.

A more charmingly varied trout-stream than this at Boñar would be difficult to find. The banks are mostly open near the town, and runs alternate with gliding stretches of deeper water. Were I arranging a fishing tour in Spain, I would certainly revisit this picturesque valley in León. The lodging at the fonda is not luxurious, but the place is clean and the landlord obliging.

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Fishing may be varied with mountain climbs and the exploration of the surrounding wild country.

The trout that we caught were none of them over $\frac{1}{2}$ pound apiece, and I should think that the average weight is less than that. Still, quantity makes up for weight when trout are strong, and there is no question that the trout at Boñar give capital sport for their size. In the gorge, especially high up, there are pools holding much bigger trout. I was advised to fish this part of the river, and to hire a vehicle to take me about five miles upstream, where the trout are said to be still more plentiful. Unfortunately, after our evening's sport another thunderstorm broke over the mountains, and a deluge of rain again flooded the river. We were sorry that our engagements would not allow us to stay at Boñar till the stream fined down again. The river was so well stocked that we would have no doubt repeated the success of that evening. But as it was still raining when we awoke the next morning, and the river was rising, we resolved to start for Bilbao.

The chico's mother, a handsome woman in picturesque dress and wooden shoes, came to

the railway-station to bid us farewell. She was much interested in the queer English people who went fishing for amusement. A group of peasant women joined her, and we departed amid the farewells of these friendly, honest León folk.

Boñar is *en route* for the Sil and the other rivers of the North-west of Spain, which I shall describe in other chapters. It should not be missed by the angler. The river is an ideal one for fly fishing, and there are plenty of fish in it. For this stream, as for other waters in Spain, the flies should be fairly large. I killed most trout on sober-coloured flies, such as the olive dun. Let the fisherman take a good stock of flies with him, as most of the flies procurable in Spain are of French manufacture, and badly tied. Madrid and Bilbao were the only towns where I found fishing-tackle shops. I was often questioned as to the prices of English rods and tackle and asked for the addresses of makers.

CHAPTER X

THE WILD LIFE OF SPAIN

MOST fishermen are more or less naturalists. Those who do not observe the wild life of the riverside miss one of the chief pleasures accompanying the sport of angling. Moreover, the observant fisherman, the one who has trained his eyes to see and his brain to retain impressions, is usually the most successful wielder of the fly-rod. 'How do the blackbird and thrassell with their melodious voices bid welcome to the cheerful Spring,' writes Izaak Walton, 'and in their fixed months warble forth such ditties as no art or instrument can reach to!'

We began our fishing itinerary just as the buds were opening and the birds beginning to sing. It was a new pleasure to watch the birds of a strange country, and to hear their voices in the tender green of the woods. For the first time we listened to the melodious, haunting piping of the golden

oriole, a rare visitant in England, and watched the brilliant bird flit from tree to tree as he called to his mate. I noted down the date of the first flight of swallows, and I find that we saw these migrants on March 29, by the Ason.

Along the Bidasoa I noticed the familiar common wagtails, wrens, robins, thrushes, and chaffinches. Hawks of several kinds abound in the mountainous parts of Spain. Buzzards, circling in companies, were often to be seen high over the rocky summits of the Cantabrian Range and along the wooded lower slopes of the Pyrenees. On March 13 lizards came out in large numbers to sun themselves. We often heard the cry of the owl at twilight, especially in Portugal.

The North of Spain abounds with bird-life. In Castile the foolish destruction of the trees has almost banished the birds. The farmers cut down the timber because trees harbour birds, and birds eat seeds. Around Madrid the State, realizing the folly of denuding the exposed and wind-swept land of all foliage, has made many big plantations. In the north there are mighty forests of pine and chestnut, haunted by many kinds of birds. Quails and partridges are fairly numerous in some districts. We saw a number of partridges

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around Toledo, and here only were hares at all common.

The marismas, or marshes, of the tidal Guadalquivir teem with all kinds of wild-fowl. Snipe are fairly plentiful on the flats by the Minho estuary in Portugal. We saw many storks. One had made her nest, which had young birds in it, on the top of a church-tower at Avila. Storks may often be seen sailing high over the city of Seville, and there is a colony of small brown hawks upon the roof of the cathedral.

The swamps and ponds in the neighbourhood of rivers swarm with bright green frogs. They are larger than our English frogs, and they pass most of their time in the water. On a still night you may hear their peculiar croaking a mile away. It is a monotonous and constant rumble, and one can scarcely believe that the sound is emitted by frogs. The legs of these green frogs are a table delicacy in parts of Spain. They are cooked in batter, and form a course at some of the fondas. Quite unwittingly we ate these dainties at one of the comidas (dinners) in León. We were a little puzzled at the dish. The tender legs were like those of birds, starlings or wheatears, and it was not until we had eaten them that we learned that

we had tasted frog! Perhaps in this case 'tis folly to be wise!

We had not the fortune to encounter any of the larger fauna of Spain, though we were often near the haunts of boars, wolves, and deer. At one hamlet on the Rio Sil, I was offered the loan of a gun to go in quest of a hind and her calf that had been seen once or twice in a neighbouring vineyard. I am not a deer-stalker, and if I were I would certainly not choose to murder a female deer and her young in June.

That fine wild creature the ibex still ranges the peaks amid the eternal snows. Interesting accounts of adventures in pursuit of Spanish ibex will be found in Messrs. Chapman and Buck's 'Wild Spain,' and in Lord Walsingham's contribution to the volume on 'English Sport.' Boars are hunted with hounds in the South of Spain, and in the neighbourhood of Gibraltar Señor Larios and his friends pursue the fox in the British style. Foxes are very plentiful in the wild parts of the country, and the wild-cat is far from scarce. The marten is also found.

The otter is fairly distributed, and is rarely molested in the Peninsula. I have never heard of otter-hunting with hounds in Spain. The sport

has been introduced into France. There are rivers in Spain and Portugal that would provide splendid otter-hunting from February until October.

An intelligent farmer from Asturias, whom we met on a coach ride in León, said that bears were still fairly common in the mountains of his part of the country. A friend of his had shot one during that year. I was told that bears haunt the mountains near Reinosa.

I saw no snakes in Spain except vipers. These were very common along the rocky banks of the Rio Sil above Orense. You could scarcely walk 20 yards without seeing one or two of these handsome, venomous animals. At first I made a circuit of a few yards to avoid these viper-haunted spots, but in a few days I grew accustomed to vipers, and occasionally trod on one of the reptiles by design or accident. Our gilly shunned them as 'muy malo' (very bad).

As for the fish, I shall write of them as we proceed. Two species, the boga and a bigger, chub-like fish, were quite new to me. The shad of the Minho also interested us. I have not read any modern Spanish work on ichthyology. Walton speaks of 'an ingenious Spaniard,' one John (or

Juan) Valdesso, whose 'Hundred and Ten Considerations' were translated into English in 1638. Valdesso remarks that 'Rivers and the inhabitants of the watery elements were made for wise men to contemplate, and fools to pass by without consideration.' Who was this Valdesso? And are his 'Considerations' always upon beasts, birds, and fishes, or upon matters in general? I cannot find his name in the admirable 'Bibliotheca Piscatoria,' 1883 edition, though other Spanish names are given in the volume.

Among the trees of the country we saw the palms of Andalusia, which were probably introduced by the Moors. The ilex abounds in the forests between Avila and Madrid. Chestnuts clothe the slopes of many of the rivers, and afford pleasant shade from the scorching noonday sunshine. The orange, olive, myrtle, and almond, flourish almost everywhere.

In Navarre the woods resembled those of our country. There we saw primroses and daffodils, the former in profusion along the Bidasoa. We were not fortunate enough to come into the habitat of the Spanish iris, which is exported in such large quantities to England. In Castile we passed through thousands of acres of

wild-lavender. These great patches of purple give beauty to the plains, and the odour of the flower fills the air. A species of heath grows to the height of 4 or 5 feet in some parts of Spain and Portugal, and forms impenetrable jungles. In Portugal we could not walk by some of the rivers without treading upon the beautiful osmunda fern. It is as common as our English bracken in many parts of the Peninsula ; in fact, when we wanted ferns to cover our fish from the sun we were obliged to use the osmunda, for there was often no choice between that and any other. We noted many varieties of ferns throughout the North of Spain.

The ornithologist and botanist will find a fertile field of observation in Spain. In the semi-tropical area of the South many interesting species of birds frequent the river marshes and the forests, while the sterner North affords the study of other varieties, both familiar and scarce. Amid the luxuriant vegetation of Portugal, and upon the plains and mountains of Spain, the student of plants will discover innumerable kinds of curious flowers, ferns, and mosses.

CHAPTER XI

OUR HOME IN THE GORGE

AT times we had to endure some amount of discomfort. One of our trials was hunger. In most of the fondas of the Basque Provinces, and in the towns, we had very fair board, but in León our diet was sometimes limited to eggs, leathery, lean, and tasteless beef, hard, stale bread, and thin wine. There is not sufficient sustenance, for those leading an active outdoor life, in white bread, without butter, and omelettes or boiled eggs. We sometimes longed for a good, plain substantial English dinner of joint, vegetables, and pudding. The Spaniard's breakfast consists of a cup of chocolate, or coffee, and a piece of dry bread. One cannot start for a day's fishing on such a slender repast. At most of the inns we bargained for eggs with our breakfast.

One misses butter, farinaceous food, and vegetables in Spain. Strange as it may seem, in this

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fertile land table vegetables are not abundant. I never saw a cooked cabbage, a dish of green peas or beans, carrots, or turnips, on a Spanish table. Here and there we could obtain salad, and sometimes globe artichokes. Some of the dishes reeked of garlic, others of malodorous oil. A crust of decent bread and a piece of Cheddar cheese would have been a luxury. The bread was too white to be nourishing, and the cream cheese was sour. Sometimes we fared really well, but now and then we had a week of very indifferent and inadequate meals. Once or twice my wife had to smoke cigarettes to stay the sense of keen hunger by the riverside.

A gentleman in Wales wrote to inquire whether he could take his daughter on a fishing tour in Spain. Was it a suitable country for ladies? I flinch at such a question. So much depends on the ladies. For the sake of travel, experience, and sport, some women will endure extreme discomfort with fortitude. A woman who cannot bear changes in climate, long railway-journeys, cramped travelling in coaches, fasting, midge-bites, rough quarters, and social intercourse with labourers and muleteers, will not enjoy a fishing excursion in the wilder parts of Spain. Dainty

and fastidious lady anglers may be advised to stay at a first-class hotel in Scotland, where there are warm baths, lifts, downy beds, a good table, and refined company, and to avoid the rough inns and the hardships attending an unconventional tour in Spain and Portugal.

On the other hand, women who are not bound hand and foot and soul itself, as some are, by a hundred conventions, precedents, traditions, and prejudices, and who possess fair health, will gain pleasure and knowledge of the world by a journey through the remote districts of the Peninsula. They will find that Spanish bed-linen rivals our own in cleanliness and whiteness. Let me give them a word of advice. If tea is essential to their comfort, as tobacco is to mine, let them take a spirit-stove in their bags. Horniman's tea in tins can be obtained in most of the Spanish towns. So even that direful institution, afternoon tea, is not impossible in the rudest parts of Spain.

A few miles above the town of Orense, on the railway, is the grand gorge where the river Sil joins the Minho. A third stream from the mountains of Galicia flows into the Sil at this point, and at the junction of the three waters is the remote village of Lps Pearas, where the natives depend

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chiefly for a livelihood upon their vines and chestnut-trees. We arrived at the station of Los Pearas late at night. Inquiry for a casa de huéspedes (house of hospitality) brought us a guide, who lit a lamp, shouldered our bags and tackle, and conducted us along the railroad and across a crazy footbridge to a cluster of houses. Our porter knocked at the door of one of the houses, and a woman's voice was heard within. 'They cannot take you in,' said our guide. Thereupon we held a conference. Was there another house for strangers? It was nearly midnight, and we were tired and hungry. The prospect was somewhat dispiriting. Should we be forced to spend the night on the mountainside?

But just as we were turning away the door was opened, and we heard a man's voice. To our great surprise, he spoke in perfect English. 'Come in,' he said. 'They will put you up. I had no idea you were English.' We entered a quaint apartment, half kitchen and half village shop, and were very cordially received by the worthy host and hostess. The Englishman was a boarder in the house, a sportsman and keen angler, who spends the greater part of the year in this mountain retreat. We congratulated ourselves

upon our good fortune, and in a short time we were sitting to supper at the table of the hostess, and listening to the English angler's report upon the river. He held out no promise of brilliant sport with the fly, but he spoke of 'twenty-pound baskets of trout' made by spinning the natural bait. It was morning before we retired to our little bedroom, for the chance of talking with an English sportsman was not an event of everyday occurrence. Mr. L. had fished the Sil during several seasons, and he knew every pool for a dozen miles up the river. His reputation as a fisherman was the talk of the natives, and many dishes of trout were given by him to figure upon the table at local fiestas.

We lay down to sleep lulled by the cry of the wild foaming river. It was a queer little room, clean, but not sumptuous. The morning was chilly, but gloriously bright. Martins were hawking by the window of our room. A scent of coffee mounted the staircase, and we heard Mr. L. whistling as he dressed.

We had breakfast the next day on a big balcony overhanging the turbulent river. At ten o'clock Mr. L. proposed that we should try the fly until luncheon-time. He took us to some likely-

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looking water, which we fished for an hour without rising a fish. In the afternoon we obtained some bogas for bait, and spun with them. Luck was, however, against us during our visit to Los Pearas.

I will relate some of the experiences of our English friend, whose skill in spinning from the Nottingham reel, and knowledge of the whereabouts of big fish, insure him excellent sport in the deep, rough pools of this wild river. Mr. L. often catches from three to four trout in a day, occasionally weighing together about 20 pounds. He has caught fish in the Sil up to 10 pounds, and he has seen a trout weighing as much as 30 pounds, which was killed by a peasant with a digging-fork in the shallow water of a tributary. There is no doubt that there are trout of huge proportions in these great pools of the Minho and Sil at Los Pearas. The local anglers, who have learned to work a spinning boga, after a fashion, occasionally lose very big fish. My friend uses a stiffish spinning rod, a salmon-line, a strong flight, with swivels, and for bait a boga of about 4 inches. He casts from a wooden reel without a check, and spins off the tail of the broken water where it tumbles into a pool.



ON THE BANKS OF THE RIO SIL.

These Sil trout fight like salmon. They tear the line off the reel, leap repeatedly, and sometimes sulk. A long reel-line is necessary, and the tackle must be as strong as that used for ferox in Scotland. The trout are beautifully shaped and coloured. They can rarely be tempted by spinning artificial baits. The boga appears to be their staple food, and they will not take a fly. I caught a few small trout with the fly in the tributary, but I could not rise a fish, except bogas, in the main river.

I asked Señor Sastre, our host, if he had ever seen any English anglers on the river besides Mr. L. and ourselves.

‘Yes, many years ago,’ he said, ‘two English gentlemen came, and set up a tent across the river there.’

The señor was an important man in these parts. He kept the only tienda, a general store where one might buy anything—from a dozen eggs to a pair of boots. His wife was young, gentle, and amiable, with a refined, sensitive face. She was a perfect hostess. We fared excellently. Good roasted joints decked the table; the fowls were tender, and the wine of the district bright and free from logwood. We had most of our meals on

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the big balcony, with the cool air blowing upon us from the mountains. The children romped around—little girls with olive skins and dark hair. My wife soon won their confidence. It was an ideal Spanish country home.

CHAPTER XII

IN THE KINGDOM OF GALICIA

ONE hot afternoon I went up the little stream that flows down to the Sil through a deep and delightful glen. The chico of the house accompanied me. Mr. L. was entertaining some Spanish visitors, including two of the Guardia Civil, who had come to look for certain highway robbers who were causing terror among the natives of the hamlet in the gorge. We followed a track up the glen, among vineyards. The grapes were small, and in green clusters on the riotous vines. Below us the burn murmured in its rocky channel, and above were wild hills devoid of foliage.

The chico talked in Spanish. He thought I would understand him better if he raised his voice, so when I was at a loss to catch his meaning he shouted the phrase in a louder tone. I gathered that the little river had been badly poached. My companion pointed to a herb growing by the

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waterside. It resembled our wild hemlock, and had yellowish leaves and flowers. A few handfuls of these poisonous leaves, bruised and thrown into a small pool, will bring all the trout to the top, gasping for breath. The action of this plant upon fish seems as fatal as that of lime. I uttered a malediction upon the herb and those who use it for the wholesale murder of trout.

The glen was even wilder and more beautiful as we proceeded. No trace of a path was to be seen. We scrambled over rocks and through undergrowth, and came to a scour that looked tempting for a trial of the fly. I fished upstream, casting as well as I could among the rocks, and trying to avoid the overhanging boughs. Not a fish rose to my fly. The sun's rays penetrated the bosage, and the rocks of the stream were burning hot. It was too bright for fly fishing, and, moreover, I doubted whether the poachers had left a single fish in the burn.

I sat down and smoked a pipe, while the chico reclined on the grass. The beauty of the little ravine cannot be described. It was a veritable fairyland. Masses of boulders rose in chaos from the verge of the stream ; the wooded slopes were impenetrable, and there was a long strip of deep

blue sky above two high cliffs that seemed to bar the passage of the burn. From below the gray cliffs came the rumble of falling water.

I wandered on in this enchanted glen, and came to the cliffs. The stream rushed in a white torrent between the banks, and fell into a clear pool. 'Surely there must be trout here,' was my reflection. I took off the fly cast, and put on a small gilt Devon minnow. At the very first spin there was a yellow flash in the water, as a trout darted out from beneath a flat, sunken rock. He hovered, saw me, and shot back to his holt. 'At any rate, I have *seen* one trout,' I said.

The chico joined me, and watched my operations with interest. Presently I was actually fast in a trout. My rod was bending to the plunges of a fish, and I saw my prey as he rushed up the pool. I turned his head, and netted him as he came down. This was the only trout that I caught during about two hours of careful spinning—a fish of less than $\frac{1}{2}$ pound.

We returned on the other side of the stream, and before I went indoors I made a few casts with the fly over a dammed-up pool near the house. Here I hooked a few small bogas and rose one trout.

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The next day Mr. L. started for a village several miles away over the mountains. The priest of the aldea had invited him to attend a fiesta. We were sorry to lose his company. His man started early to carry his traps, and after breakfast Mr. L. set out on foot, and climbed the steep, winding path to the open summit. With the good little chico as our guide, we went up the main river to spin for trout. Our gilly had provided several bogas for bait.

We went up and down along a narrow, stony path by the wide foaming river. Vipers glided to cover at our approach. Every fresh bend of the river seemed to open out a finer, more savage prospect. The roar of the water at some of the falls was almost deafening. Our lad led the way nimbly, jumping from rock to rock. We reached a pinnacle, and gazed down upon the powerful flood surging among the boulders. These deeps of the Sil are almost horrible to look upon, as they swirl and eddy beneath the crags and banks of scree.

After a pleasant repast in the shade we began to spin. The chico said that Mr. L. had caught a five-pound trout in this very pool a few days before our coming. We hoped that such luck would fall

to us. Alas! the desire was not to be realized. Pool after pool was tried, and two spinning tackles lost among the rocks. I pricked one trout. He came out from under a boulder, plucked at the bait, and then fled. This fish looked as though he might weigh a couple of pounds.

‘Hard lines, but it can’t be helped,’ I said, as we threw ourselves down to rest below a huge mass of dislodged rock.

I took out my dictionary to look for a Spanish word. When I had found it, the chico asked if he might have the book. I gave it to him, and he turned over the pages with intense interest. Presently he found a word that excited his orthodox indignation. ‘Cismático’ was the word of terror. ‘Cismático malo, malo!’ he murmured. I suppose that from the boy’s point of view a schismatic is a very dangerous and immoral person. Good little chico! there are many things undreamt of in your philosophy. How odd that the child should have chanced upon that word ‘cismático’!

Shad ascend the Sil, and spawn in these higher reaches of the river. They are netted in some of the pools, and even taken in long-handled nets in certain parts. A few salmon, no doubt, come up as high as this reach at Los Pearas; but the over-

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netting in the estuary, and, in fact, all the way along the Minho and Sil, has ruined the salmon-fishing for anglers. Ford speaks of the Minho as a productive salmon river. It may have been so in his day. At the present time only a few salmon can escape the nets that are always at work in the lower reaches at Caminha and Tuy. Yet what a grand salmon river it might be! Water that can produce trout up to 30 pounds in weight ought to be capable of providing mighty salmon. As for the shad, they come up in large numbers, as I shall show in another chapter.

We saw nothing grander in Spain than this lonely, rugged gorge of the Sil at Los Pearas. It is a scene of beauty and majesty mingled with the terrific. The rolling, roaring river is cruel in its might, fierce and remorseless in its wild flow. It has claimed many victims. The loud cry of its tumbling, tossing waters lingered long in our ears. My wife was haunted with tragic dreams of this strange, fear-inspiring flood.

George Borrow refers to the Minho in his 'Wild Wales,' in writing upon Monmouthshire. Monmouth is named after 'the river Mynwy, or Minno,' as Borrow has it. This tributary of the Wye is more commonly called the Monnow, and

it is a good trout stream. 'There is a river of much the same name, not in Macedon, but in the Peninsula,' says Borrow, 'namely, the Minho, which probably got its denomination from that race cognate to the Cumry, the Gael, who were the first colonizers of the Peninsula, and whose generic name yet stares us in the face, and salutes our ears in the words "Galicia" and "Portugal."'

According to Dr. Isaac Taylor, in his valuable 'Words and Places,' *gal* is a Celtic root. It is found in Gall-ia, Gal-way, Done-gal, and other place-names. Dr. Taylor says 'the inhabitants of Gal-icia and Portu-gal possess more Celtic blood than those who inhabit any other portion of the Peninsula.'

In appearance they bear a certain resemblance to the Welsh Celts. They have a hard struggle with Nature in these rocky regions; but they are thrifty and shrewd, and very little seems to suffice for their wants. Every bit of soil that can be cultivated in the Valley of the Minho is planted with vines, potatoes, and other vegetables. The Galicians are hardy, like most mountaineers. They love their savage, romantic land, and they fought fiercely to beat back the Moorish invaders.

The Gallegos, as they are called in Spain, have

their own tongue, their own customs, songs, and dances. Their women wear bright bodices and shawls, and they are fond of big earrings. Upon their heads they tie gaily-coloured handkerchiefs. They work in the fields with the men, and work as well as their husbands, brothers, and sons, turning the soil with forks, training the vines, and garnering the chestnuts and grapes. The life of the Gallegos recalls a passage in 'Don Quixote,' where the Knight resolves to turn shepherd :

“The oaks, the cork-trees, and chestnut-trees will afford us both lodging and diet, the willows will yield us their shade, the roses present us their inoffensive sweets, and the spacious meads will be our carpets, diversified with colours of all sorts; blessed with the purest air, and unconfined alike, we shall breathe that, and freedom . . .”

““Sure enough,” quoth Sancho, “this sort of life suits me to a hair.””

The Gallegos do not care to roam far from their country. They are said to possess so great a love of their native land that home-sickness is with them a true malady.

CHAPTER XIII

AT PONFERRADA

BEFORE leaving Los Pearas, let me say that the best water for the heavy trout is a league or more up the river. Some of the pools are 40 feet in depth. Here and there the river rushes with tremendous force between great boulders, or falls in cascades of 5 feet or 6 feet in height. Very little of the water can be waded. Spinning from the rocks is the most successful mode of fishing. These big fighting trout afford magnificent sport. Mr. L. is often compelled to play a fish for half an hour. An apparently beaten trout will sometimes make another great rush for the opposite side of the pool. These upper pools of the Sil and Minho may be said to produce the largest trout in Europe. The rivers are poached in various ways, but these huge deep pools baffle the illicit fishermen, who devote their attention to the shallows and tributaries.

We were sorry to leave the good Sastre couple at the end of a week's pleasant sojourn. A long, slow railway-journey brought us to Ponferrada at two in the morning. The fonda omnibus was outside the station, and two or three sleepy passengers left the train. We entered the vehicle, which rattled and bumped us through the silent streets of the little town. At a kind of sentry-box the omnibus drew up, and a man in uniform, holding a lantern, peered into the coach.

‘Turistas, Ingleses,’ I said to the officer.

He muttered something to the driver, and the pair of scraggy horses started at a gallop up the street, and over a bridge spanning the Sil. A steep serpentine road led us to the plaza and the fonda. The señora was up to receive guests, and she led us to a room at the back of the house.

I stepped on to the balcony. Daylight was just stealing over the mountains, and a snowy crest was tinged with pink and gold. The moon was shining above a grand escarpment of rock, and daybreak had not yet paled the brilliant stars. A loud crow issuing from a fowl-roost was the only sound besides a low murmur of flowing water. I could hardly leave the balcony. The scene was enchanting.

Ponferrada is amongst imposing mountains, and situated on a hill over 1,600 feet above the sea. It has quaint buildings, and commands a splendid view of the Sil, which issues from a gorge about a mile upstream, and flows through the town. The place can boast of a fishing association, and holds, therefore, the esteem of the angler. The members are rod fishermen, with a detestation of dynamite. The ley de pesca (fishing law) prohibits the employment of explosives for killing fish, but in these lonely valleys it is no easy matter to discover poachers, and a large quantity of fish is destroyed.

I am glad to say, however, that trout are increasing at Ponferrada. Since my visit I have received a letter from a local fisherman, who tells me several heavy trout, some of over 6 pounds, were taken with the fly during the spring of 1903. The bogas are also more numerous than they were, which should show that both trout and coarse fish are multiplying through the efforts of the association to suppress the use of infernal dynamite.

You can even buy artificial flies in Ponferrada. The maker is a professional fisherman and tackle-maker named Gancedo. He has fished the Sil for many years, and his son is also an angler. Gancedo's flies are big hackles, with plain, sober

dressings. The gut is coarse, and the flies are rough. But they kill fish in the Sil, as I shall show presently. Altogether the outlook is hopeful at Ponferrada, and I trust that English fishermen will not forget to contribute to the association.

There is a choice of two hotels at Ponferrada. We chose the one in the plaza, and paid 5 pesetas per diem for moderate accommodation. The weather was anything but favourable, but upon the day after our arrival I engaged an attendant to carry my bag, brogues, and wading-stockings, and started out at ten in the morning to fish up the Sil. Antonio, my companion, was a good-humoured, attentive lad, with merry blue eyes. He told me that he had been out fishing once before with an Englishman, who 'caught nothing.'

A young chum joined Antonio before we were out of the town. The day was fiery hot and dead still. No ripples showed on the clear green pools. I fished several runs with the fly.

We came to a long shallow with enough stream for a wet fly, and I waded in and began to cast. For half an hour I fished without rising a single trout. In the gorge, half a mile further up the river, I was more successful. I rose several fish and caught a brace. Then the natural flies

disappeared and the trout ceased to rise. As Antonio declared that there were trout as long as his forearm in the pool, I put on a small Devon minnow, and tried spinning close to the rocky bank. This failed to tempt a fish, so I put on the fly cast again and went up to some broken water. Here I took another trout of about $\frac{1}{2}$ pound, and rose a fish here and there.

On a dull day I think the pool would yield some good trout. I saw several big fish near the surface, but the glare was so intense that one could not cast without putting them down. A three-pounder jumped in one of the runs further up, and I saw enough rises to satisfy me that there are a very fair number of trout in this length.

Antonio's friend departed at mid-day, after sharing the contents of the luncheon-bag. My gilly was a jewel. He was inexperienced in fishing, but he knew instinctively what was required of him, and he seemed at once to understand the queries that I put to him in imperfect Spanish. Antonio told me that bears, wolves, wild-cats, and foxes, inhabited the mountains of the district. He spoke of a laguna, several miles from Ponferrada, full of very big eels and no other fish.

I was much impressed by the intelligence of the

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Spanish rural working class. These people have a rare native wit, and are without the stupidity and apathy often associated with the terms 'rustic.' or 'bucolic.' Here was an ostler at a country inn, who could converse in an entertaining fashion with a foreigner who possessed a meagre acquaintance with the language of the country. What is more, Antonio often read my thoughts before I uttered them. When education spreads among the people of Spain, we shall hear less dismal prophecy of her downfall. She will be born again before many years have passed.

Antonio and I had the river to ourselves. We met not a solitary peasant throughout the day. I was casting over a pool, when my attendant uttered a cry and began to strip off his clothes. He pointed wildly to the river, and in the middle of the stream I saw a floating fish. Antonio was into the water in a trice. He swam with a powerful stroke, retrieved the fish, and came ashore with a look of pride. The fish looked like a chub of about a pound in weight. I did not handle it, for it was a 'demmed unpleasant body' to look upon, and possessed a powerful odour.

The lad threw the fish away, and was into his

clothes almost as quickly as he had disrobed himself. I had a mind to follow his example, and to take a plunge into the deep, cool water; but I was too tired and lazy to take off my brogues and wading-stockings.

This was an enjoyable day, though my bag only contained six trout at five o'clock. I might have waited for the evening rise, but I had promised my wife that I would be at the fonda by the dinner-hour. We had a long, rough walk before us. Antonio proposed a short-cut. There is a Spanish proverb, translated by George Borrow, to the purport that 'He who takes short-cuts makes more labour for himself in the long-run.' A stiff climb in the broiling sun brought us to a long rocky ridge over the river. The effort of climbing was rewarded by a wide and glorious view of the mountains stretching away into Asturias, the course of the Sil below Ponferrada, and the snow-capped summit which had met our first gaze from the balcony on the morning of our arrival. It was indeed a most noble panorama of grim mountain grandeur, green fertile plain, and silvery stream.

Upon the following day I went alone by an early train to Toral de los Vados (the Chief of the Fords), a village situated on the right bank of the

river, a few miles below Ponferrada. Antonio looked greatly disappointed when he saw me start alone. However, I had no especial need for his services. At Toral I took a glass of red wine at the fonda, and asked the hostess if she could provide sleeping accommodation. She answered that she would be pleased to do so.

‘Good,’ I said; ‘if there are many trout here, I will come with my wife.’

A tributary joins the Sil at Toral de los Vados. The main river flows through a wider valley than that of Ponferrada, and spreads itself over gravelly shoals. Better water for wading and fishing the fisherman could not desire. I looked up at the ardent sky. There was not the slightest sign of a change in the weather. The river was clear as crystal. Well, perhaps I might entice a few trout from the rough water. There is nothing like trying.

I fished down the tributary to the big river. Plenty of troutlets darted away from the banks of the little stream, and I caught one of them on the orange dun. Then I came to the Sil, and found a fine tumbling run, which seemed a likely place. The truth is not always interesting. I must, however, honestly confine myself to dry fact. No

fish, except the fingerling and one small boga, came to hand that day. I hooked one good fish. I saw him turn in the water, but in a second he was free, and I was lamenting.

Most of the day was spent in the shade of a grove near the river. The heat was tremendous, and there was no breeze to cool the air of the valley. I saw two men building up fish-traps with stones, and one solitary and sun-scorched herdsman tending some cows and goats. At about four o'clock I had to catch the train for Ponferrada. The train was crowded with harvesters, hundreds of Gallegos in the costume of their country. They crowded at the windows and filled all the seats. I was glad that the journey would only be one of a few minutes. Antonio was at the station.

‘Many?’ he asked.

‘Nada’ (Nothing), I replied.

He offered sympathy, and I got into the ramshackle omnibus.

CHAPTER XIV

THE HAMLET OF MATAROSA

WE found agreeable company at the fonda. The registrar of the town was a constant guest, and he showed us great politeness. This caballero was an educated man, with a refined face and pleasant manners. We also made friends with the Mayor of a pueblo amongst the mountains, about twenty-five miles from Ponferrada. He said that if we would go up into his country we should 'catch trout enough.' Was not the river full of fish? Why, there were men living there who made it their business to catch trout for the Madrid market. They lived by fishing.

'Do they use nets?' I asked.

'Not so much,' the Mayor replied. 'They have cañas (rods) like your own.'

One evening the registrar said: 'Señor, I have seen to-day a man who speaks English, and knows much about fishing.'



A SPANISH VENTA, OR WAYSIDE TAVERN, WITH THE HOSTESS,
HER DAUGHTER, AND GRANDCHILD AT THE DOOR.

‘Bueno—many thanks,’ I returned. ‘I would like to meet him.’

‘You shall do so this evening,’ said the registrar. ‘His name is Angel Gancedo, and he is a waiter at the casino of which I am a member.’

After dinner, the registrar, the Mayor, and another caballero escorted us to the club. Great respect was shown to the English señora, who was still unmistakably English, though she wore a black mantilla. I cannot say whether Spanish ladies visit the clubs. At any rate, my wife’s entry caused no astonishment. We all sat down to a table, and the Mayor called for coffee. Then Angel Gancedo appeared. He is a young man of about twenty-eight, the son of Gancedo the fisherman of Ponferrada.

‘So you speak English?’ I said.

‘Oh yes,’ he replied, with an apologetic shrug of the shoulders. ‘I was servant to an English family at Rivadavia, and I have travelled with an English merchant.’ He mentioned a name well known in Covent Garden.

‘You are also a fisherman?’

‘I have fished all my life, and my father before me.’

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Our Spanish hosts listened to the English tongue with smiling interest.

‘Is it good English that he speaks?’ asked one of them.

‘Very good,’ I said.

Angel rose at once in the estimation of the company. He was actually able to carry on a long conversation with the English strangers. Bravo, Ponferrada! Even in Seville there are few men who can speak the English language.

We arranged that Angel should accompany us up the river, to act as our guide and interpreter. He proposed to bring his rod, and some mysterious bait, which he had found very deadly for trout. We agreed to meet at the fonda upon the following morning. After an exchange of civilities with our friends, we left the casino.

Angel arrived at the hotel at about nine in the morning. The diligence did not leave Ponferrada until one o'clock, but our guide had resolved to be punctual. We strolled about the town, and Angel showed me his house. He is a married man with one child. The house was purchased from the proceeds of transactions in the way of exports with the gentleman in Covent Garden. It was strange to hear a native of this out-of-the-way

corner of Spain talking of Covent Garden. Angel had never been to England.

Then my companion proposed that we should drink a glass of white wine. We entered a wine tienda, sat down, and exchanged cigarettes. The landlady questioned Angel about me. Who was I? English or French? A fisherman for pleasure! Caramba! how queer! Well, no doubt the English are a curious people. When we returned to the fonda, a very important person was standing in the portico. He saluted me by raising his sombrero, and I lifted my boina. I gathered from Angel that the gentleman was a Deputy-Governor or some other official of rank. He wished to see my artificial flies. I handed him my fly-book, and he turned over the leaves.

‘Bonita!’ (Pretty!), he remarked. ‘But they are small, very small.’

Compared with the huge moscas used by the León anglers, my flies were certainly small, though in Yorkshire or Derbyshire they would be described as big. The señor gave me back the fly-book with a gracious bow. I raised my boina, and he went his way.

Angel’s infallible bait was the live stone-fly. He had a tin box containing a number of these

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insects. His rod was about 20 feet long, made of bamboo, with a switch for a top. Attached to this was a length of cord, and a cast of stout gut, strong enough to hold a twenty-pound salmon. This was all the luggage that he carried.

The coach was supposed to leave at one o'clock. It was about two before we started. Angel and the Mayor occupied the interior, and my wife and I sat by the driver. There was a mixed team of gaunt mules and bony horses, six in number, each with jangling bells around his neck. The jehu started his steeds with the customary yells and oaths. They broke into a lolloping canter along a straight dusty road, and the coach swayed from side to side.

Before we had gone a couple of miles, the flanks of the half-starved beasts were wet with sweat. I knew what was coming. The man took up his whip, and began to butt-end the ribs of the wretched creatures. Whack! whack! whack! Every blow seemed to fall upon us, to sting our flesh. I could not endure it. I longed to fling the fellow from the box.

'No, no!' I cried, as the driver was dealing a fearful blow at one of the horses.

I held his arm firmly.

‘ Oh, please don’t beat them,’ begged my wife.
‘ We are going quite fast enough.’

The man looked astounded. A frown crossed his face, and I feared that we might have a quarrel and a scene. However, he put the whip down without uttering a word. No doubt he regarded us as lunatics. His beasts were not Christians ; they had no souls. The Holy Church had never forbidden him to beat them. Ah, this cruelty to animals, it is a sad blot upon Spain !

Our remonstrances had some effect upon the coach-driver. For the rest of the stage he used the lash less freely, and never the handle of the whip to thrash his skinny jades. We were glad when we reached the halfway house, and the horses and mules were led away to a stable. Poor animals ! their legs shook beneath them, and their coats were reeking. The roadside venta stood at the foot of a pass, a lonely hovel, one bare room with earth for the floor. Angel said that robbers had broken into the house one night, bound the proprietor to a chair, and stripped him of his belongings. It was the kind of den where one might expect to meet with adventures.

The fresh team started at a gallop up the steep ascent. A new cocheró held the reins, and

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cracked his long whip over the ears of the leaders. Jingle-jangle we went up the hill, which was almost as steep as the upper part of the Pass of Llanberis. Our driver stamped his feet, shouted, raved, swore, and brandished the whip. He behaved in this fashion until the team broke into a canter along one of the few level stretches of the road. Gray mountains bounded the valley. The country was sterile and the grass parched. Thick dust lay upon the highway, and trailed behind the wheels of the rumbling diligence.

The district is sparsely populated. We passed only one village, a primitive place on the rocky bank of the Sil, with squat houses, picturesque peasants, and an air of poverty. We stayed here for a few minutes, and then went bowling along a lovely vale, with wooded slopes below rocky peaks, and the river foaming deep down in its rugged channel.

‘Matarosa,’ said the driver, pulling up at the door of a small stone-built posada.

The Mayor alighted, and we were introduced to the host and hostess of this very humble tavern. Mountains, rocks, fir-trees, a bridge over a deep pool, the Sil, a few squalid houses by the roadside, and a boy in a sheepskin coat—such was our first

glimpse of Matarosa. Daniel Perez was our host's cognomen. He was a burly, swarthy man, in a blouse and boina. The hostess was plump. She carried a baby in her arms, and wore a short green skirt of many pleats, a bright bodice, and a pink handkerchief upon her head. We bargained for boarding terms, and agreed to pay 4 pesetas each by the day.

Then Perez led us to his wine-shed, and we tasted wine from a huge cask while his dame prepared a meal. We dined in a room which would be described as a 'tap' in England. The table was of rough wood; the seats were wooden benches. Behind a small counter were a few big sausages, a tub of pickled trout, and sundry bottles of wine and spirits. There was no glass to the window. You passed through a covered courtyard, where mules were stabled, to enter this apartment. The place was undoubtedly rustic, and the fare was plain.

Muleteers, herdsmen, and wayfarers formed the company at this tavern. They were rough-looking fellows, but all of them picturesque, and none of them uncivil. Angel had had some misgivings concerning our reception at the hamlet.

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‘These are good people,’ he whispered. ‘It is all right.’

‘Good appetite attend you, gentlemen,’ said an old man from the doorway.

He sat down and began to question Angel. The old peasant was a fisherman, and he made his own flies. I have some of them in my desk as I write—big hackles, with bodies of string, on large hooks.

‘He says we shall catch trout to-night,’ interpreted Angel.

The old fisherman looked at my flies. Santa Maria! they were pretty enough. But, man, how could I catch big trout with those little hooks? And the rod, it was too short, too slender—a mere toy, fit only for children. He jerked his thumb to the road, where his 20 feet of bamboo rested against the balcony. That was the sort of caña for the trout of the Sil. A group of open-eyed peasants, men, women, and children, stood in the doorway while we talked. I addressed them in English, and they smiled and laughed. We were the first English folk seen in their hamlet. They talked in a dialect which was wholly unintelligible to me, and sometimes baffling to Angel. We were among the people: there was no doubt about it. I

wonder whether they were as interested in us as we were in them.

There were still two hours of daylight. We started up the river, accompanied by the old fisherman's son. The glen was beautiful in the fading sunlight. Angel and the native took one side of the stream, and we fished from the other bank.

'A rise,' I said, as the water was troubled close to my point fly.

'I have him!' cried my wife.

She had hooked a trout just off a wild rush of water among rocks. There was no doubt that the fish was a good one, for the little greenheart rod bent like a sickle, and the line flew out of the reel. But fish and hook soon parted company. Never mind: this was an earnest of sport to come. That evening, however, not one of us brought a single fish to the bank. I rose at least a dozen fish, and pricked some of them; but luck was against us. We went back to incur the banter of the landlord. Four rods and no fish! Perhaps he muttered the Spanish equivalent for 'duffers.' We were, at all events, satisfied that the river was well stored with trout. The evening was passed in conversation with Angel.

CHAPTER XV

BY THE WILD SIL

‘ANOTHER burning, cloudless day,’ I said, stepping on to the balcony of the inn.

It was half-past seven, and the sun was high over the mountains. Two Civil Guards, with their rifles under their arms, came down a path on the opposite side of the Sil, and crossed the bridge. They had been scouring the mountains during the night. Were they in search of brigands or of contrabandists? The Guards saluted as they passed the house.

‘Good-day, señor ; I hope you are rested.’

These exchanges of courtesy in Spain are pleasant. They make the stranger feel at home in a foreign land, and show that the people are kindly disposed towards one.

‘Yes, many thanks. It is very hot.’

‘Si, señor. God be with you.’ And the men passed on, the sun gleaming upon their glazed,

black, three-cornered hats and the barrels of their rifles.

At the end of the balcony was a heap of bedding and blankets. Perez and his wife, good souls, had vacated their own bedroom, and slept on the balcony, so that the English people might have the best apartment that their posada could afford.

‘What shall we do?’ I said to Angel. ‘This is not a good fishing-day.’

‘Yes, it is a good day for my bait,’ he responded.

‘Well, we shall see,’ I said. ‘It seems to me that we had better wait till the sun is low.’

‘No, it is better when the sun is high,’ protested Angel.

We went out into the glare, and followed a path along the right bank of the river. Angel chose to stay at a deep pool where the water was suitable for his style of fishing. My wife and I proceeded up the river, and came to a broad shallow, broken with a few rocks. Wading was safe here, and the water was perfect for fly fishing. A few small trout were bagged, and one good fish broke the gut of a dropper fly.

In a deeper length, where the water eddied near the bank, a trout of $\frac{3}{4}$ pound came at the orange

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dun, and was duly netted. This eddy was full of fish. They were rising everywhere; but the water was clear, and it was difficult to prevent one's shadow from falling upon the pool. However, the eddy yielded two more trout, and we had several rises. Then I went down to Angel's pool, to see what he was doing. He had twice risen a big trout with the stone-fly, but the fish had refused the infallible lure.

'It is too bright,' I said.

'No, it is good for my fishing,' asserted Angel.

I left him to his dapping, perched on a rock over a pool about 10 feet deep. It was just the spot for a big trout; but the sun-glare was powerful on the clear water, and every standing fish could see his shadow.

My wife had to retire to the shade. The heat was exhausting, and the glitter of the swift water tired our eyes. I wished it would rain. A little real English weather would have been a grateful change. There had been no rain for at least a fortnight. In England our friends were grumbling at the incessant downpour and the low temperature. 'We envy you,' they wrote. Well, the sunshine was glorious; we had been warmed through and through with it since the beginning

of March, and our faces were well tanned. Still, I wished that it would rain. Here was a grand river, full of trout that would rise to the fly, but the sunshine proved a serious hindrance to sport.

We decided to return to the inn and take a siesta until six o'clock. At that hour the sun would be hidden by the higher peaks of the mountains. Angel had not met with success. The infallible stone-fly had been refused with disdain, and our little hackles had done more execution. Some peasants were eating their mid-day meal in the tavern. One of them was a fine handsome girl, named Felicia Gonzalez. 'Strapping' is hardly expressive enough as an adjective to convey her proportions. She was a veritable giantess, and her age was only fourteen. Felicia appeared to be quite twenty years old. She was fair-haired, with a golden-brown skin, blue eyes, and refined features. I cannot describe her costume. It was a wealth of colour from her head-kerchief to her green stockings. She was a goat and cow keeper, and one of the best singers and dancers in Matarosa. Felicia's meal consisted of a foot of bread and a piece of fat bacon. How she enjoyed it! For our part, we could scarcely swallow our soup and stewed fowl. It was too hot to eat.

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A team of mules pulled up at the door, and the driver entered.

‘Good-day, gentlemen ; a good appetite attend you.’

Perez fished up a couple of trout from the pickle-tub, cut off a hunk of bread, and poured out a glass of red wine for the hungry muleteer. Naturally, the new-comer asked who we were, and what we were doing at Matarosa. Angel gave him the information. Having finished her luncheon, Felicia took her staff and stalked out of the inn, the soles of her wooden shoes clacketing upon the road. The muleteer and Angel lit their cigarettes, and we retired to sleep until the evening.

It was cloudy towards the late afternoon. Rain was actually threatening. A fresher breeze came down from the pine-covered hills, and whirled the dust on the road. We were refreshed by our siesta. Estanislao, the boy in the sheepskin coat, was waiting to accompany us up the river. He had brought his long, heavy bamboo rod and on his back was a basket something like an ordinary creel, but without a lid to it. We made our way up the river.

The water was no longer dazzling bright, for

the gathering clouds cast a shadow over the narrow valley. I determined to try the minnow in some wild, rushing water that afforded plenty of harbourage for trout among the rocks. To my delight, I pricked a fish at the first cast. I distinctly dislike pricking trout with the ghastly array of hooks on an artificial minnow, but I was pleased to find that the minnow so quickly attracted a fish. This pricking and missing is the worst part of minnow fishing. I think that the flying triangles are to blame. It is not often that one loses a fish hooked on the tail triangle.

Meanwhile, Estanislao was pulling out trout with his formidable bamboo rod. He cast with a loud switching noise across the stream, and let his dozen big flies swim down in the broken water. At each cast the weight of the rod nearly toppled the little fellow into the whirling current. But this chico is a good angler. He catches quite as many trout as the men. My wife took a photograph of the boy casting over a pool, near the bridge at Matarosa. I continued to spin off the rough water close to the bank. Presently a number of stones came rolling down the slope behind me. They were either set going by some

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mischievous person, or dislodged by goats. When a second volley rattled by me I put down my rod, looked up the cliff, and roared out threats of the Guardia Civil. No more stones were thrown. I do not wish to think that the missiles were aimed at me by a native. They may easily have slipped from the feet of a wandering flock of goats high up in the gorge.

The next trout that came at the minnow was well hooked. He was a stubborn fighter, and the reel sang as he made downstream in the rushing white water. I drew him sideways from the rapids, and worked him to slower water, where he gave a leap. His golden sides showed for an instant in the air. I saw that he was a good fish. After a few minutes of give and take I tired him out, and slipped the net under him. He weighed 2 pounds.

I failed to take another trout in this troubled length, though I am sure that there were many fish in it as big as the one that I had caught. Coming to a quieter reach, I put on the fly-cast, and rose two or three fish in midstream. Near the bridge I turned over a very fine trout, but he escaped. A few small trout were taken and returned. It was now almost dark, and as the

rain began to patter down we returned to the hamlet.

Reflecting upon the day's adventures, I arrived at the opinion that the natives were right when they condemned our flies as too small, and our casts as too fine. Most of the fish that I had pricked and lost made at once, upon feeling the hook, for the foaming, heavy water. Say what you will about skill and fine quality gut, it is very easy to lose a fish in these tumbling rivers. The strain is tremendous when a trout of 2 or 3 pounds weight rushes into these seething white runs and gets out of hand. You need a fairly powerful rod, a medium loch cast, and a hook with a good barb, to get on even terms with these wild, strong fish. I would undertake to rise and prick three times as many trout as the fishermen of Matarosa, by using small flies and drawn casts.

The natives leave the pools alone unless they are discoloured by flood-water, and fish only in the broken streams. On the pools I rose and lost a number of good trout. This pricking and missing became intolerable. At last I threw all my British prejudice to the winds, bought a cast of the local flies—about eight in number—and

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followed the examples of the pescadores. I used a fourteen-foot rod with both hands, a grilse line and reel, and the aforesaid thick cast and enormous flies. The result was that I rose fewer fish, and only scared them in the pools; but those that I rose in the runs I almost invariably brought to the net.

The sense of power that this heavy tackle gave me was remarkable after using a light, whippy, ten-foot rod, a thin line, and fine cast. I feared none of those terrific rushes into the boiling runs and tossing rapids. A hooked trout was held hard, soon played out, and brought to the bank. After all, it is senseless to lose good trout through a bigoted fealty to the tradition that it is unsportsmanlike to use tackle that gives one two chances instead of one in combat with fish. •

In big rough waters of the main rivers of the Peninsula, small flies, such as one would use in Devonshire or Derbyshire, are almost useless. It stands to reason that a trout must be very near the surface, and keenly on the alert, to notice a tiny olive dun hackle-fly amid the swirl and wash of a heavy run. If he sees the fly and takes it, the chances are that he will fight free; for besides the strength of a fish bred in strongly-flowing

water, and accustomed to fighting the streams, you have to contend with a great strain upon the cast caused by the push of a wild run. I am no advocate for tackle that will yank a pounder out without any play; but I have proved the futility of fishing too 'fine' in such strong rivers as the Ason, Minho, and Sil, where it is quite within the bounds of probability that you may at any moment have to try your cunning and the strength of your cast with a three-pound or four-pound fish in a tremendous force of tumbling water.

With my long rod and strong cast, bristling with the local flies, I was able to catch more trout, though I am sure that I could have obtained more rises in the slower water with my light rod, fine gut, and small flies. However, the fish fought well enough on the stronger tackle, and I was often compelled to let them run out the line and to humour them to the net.

After the rain there was a tinge of colour in the Sil. I tried the minnow again, and had many runs, beside taking trout up to a pound apiece. As the water was fining, we had some sport with the fly. Still, the local anglers easily excelled us in the number of their captures. For one reason,

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they had the good sense to begin fishing at about three in the morning, while we were soundly asleep. They also had the advantage of knowing all the best runs up and down the river for several miles, and their clumsy flies were of the right pattern for the trout of this productive water. At Matarosa, for the first time in Spain, we had to confess ourselves beaten by the native anglers. They brought back fine baskets of fish almost every night, ranging from half - pounders to pounders, and sometimes heavier trout. Just as we were beginning to know the river, it was time to move on, for we had planned a long peregrination. All things considered, however, we were gratified with our experiences at this queer little hamlet on the higher Sil.

The river here is unquestionably very productive of trout. It was seldom that the old fisherman and his son returned with less than 7 pounds of trout on the brightest days, and their catch was often 10 pounds in more favourable weather. Catches of this weight are not out of the common in parts of the United Kingdom. But the dry-fly angler who can match these takes in weight from the much-fished streams of Derbyshire must be remarkably expert.

On the Wye, for example, in the length from Bakewell to Rowsley, a ten-pound basket would be considered highly extraordinary

Writing on the Derbyshire rivers in the *Fishing Gazette*, August 29, 1903, Mr. J. Paul Taylor says: 'An occasional good day may be had (my best was four brace of fair trout 7 ounces to 9 ounces each), but it is balanced by many days averaging a brace or so.'

Half a mile of the Darent is reckoned to be worth anything from £25 to £30 for the season. No doubt the trout are big. But there are heavier trout in the Sil, and more fish, and you may angle in fifty miles of the river for two months at a less cost than the rent of a half-mile length on the Kentish streamlet. The actual expenses of fishing are restricted to the purchase of tackle; the cost of living is about 25s. a week, and the rest of the expense is in railway travelling. Unfortunately, one cannot run down to the Sil for a week-end. What would this length at Matarosa be worth in England? Here is an advertisement from the *Field* of March 5, 1904: 'Six miles of excellent trout-fishing on the Don. £50 to the end of April.'

You must be content with rough lodging if you

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go to Matarosa. The fare is the best that the house can provide, and it is hardly up to the standard of a wayside inn in Great Britain. However, the big peas (*garbanzos*) are very nourishing, to say the least; and if the hens are tough, they are still fowl. Eggs, goats' milk, bread, and wine, complete the menu, though I must not forget the cold pickled trout. I asked Perez to show hospitality to any of my compatriots who might visit Matarosa. He promised to do so, though he shook his head, and said: 'I do not think any English will come.' Who can tell? Perchance the tavern at Matarosa may grow into an anglers' hotel. We have a nomadic tribe of fishermen in England who will travel any distance in quest of trout.

During our last night at Matarosa I felt a distinct tremor of earthquake, which awoke me. In the Spanish newspapers of the following day I read that shocks had been noted in several parts of the Peninsula.

We left the hamlet with the goodwill of the people. A group assembled to bid us 'adios' when the coach drew up at the door. Estanislao was delighted with a few centimos. We drank the last glass of red wine, and Angel fastened his long



ESTANISLAS : A NATIVE FISHER-BOY.

rod along the roof of the vehicle. 'Adios, adios !'
We waved our hands to the smiling group. Our
cochero began to rave at his team, and to thump
the footboard with his feet ; and off we started
down the noble valley of the Sil for Ponferrada.

CHAPTER XVI

DOWN THE MINHO

THE noble Rio Minho rises in the north of the kingdom of Galicia, in the province of Lugo. Its source is among the mountains of Meira, to the south-east of the town of Mondonedo. Flowing southwards, and receiving numerous tributaries, the Minho passes the town of Lugo, and, watering some lovely valleys, enters the province of Orense at Los Pearas. Here, as I have said in a former chapter, the Sil joins the Minho, and the united streams form a wide, swirling, unnavigable river down to Tuy and the tidal water. My readers who know the fine limestone ravine of the Derbyshire Wye, between Monsal Dale and Miller's Dale, can gain a mind-picture in miniature of the Minho in its course above the town of Orense.

In the neighbourhood of Rivadavia the gorge of the river is magnificent, though stern and desolate. It is the ravine of the Wye on a mighty

scale. The rocks are steeper, grander, and more fantastic than those of Miller's Dale, and they are warmer in tone than the Derbyshire limestone. For leagues the Minho pursues an eager course through these lonely rugged glens. Here and there, one notes a few huts and signs of cultivation on the stony banks; but as the train runs on you enter another and wilder gorge, without any token of life save the hovering kite or roaming stonechats. In these unfrequented reaches of the river, far from human haunts, there must surely be a good store of fish. The migratory shad certainly abound in the Minho during the summer, and a few salmon come up to spawn. Mighty trout, as we have seen, lurk in the deep pools, and in the tributaries are shoals of troutlets and bogas. Another fish of the Minho is the escaló, which suggests a cross between a chub and a dace. Mr. Oswald Crawford, in 'Round the Calendar in Portugal,' notes that the Spanish and Portuguese dace 'is not the same as the dace of England, but is *Leuciscus aula*, or, to be quite correct, a Peninsular variety of *L. aula*.'

I have seen escalos of a pound in weight, and they may be taken heavier. These fish rise to the fly with avidity, and though they have not the

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pluck of the brown trout, they do not tamely yield to the fisherman. I shall presently relate our experiences with escalos. As for the shad of the Minho, they are apparently proof against any sort of bait that is offered to them. I cannot say why this is the case, for our English shad are not so disobliging to the angler, and I have described how the sábalo (shad) of the Guadalquivir are caught on baited drag-lines. But more of the shad presently. Besides the species above enumerated, there are swarms of eels in the Minho.

Following this grand river downwards, we broke our rail-journey at the town of Orense. The day was rainy, and the weather cooler than it had been for many weeks. We were driven into a café to shelter from a heavy shower. Some youths were playing billiards. When the rain ceased, we roamed about the town, and met a man with a fishing-rod. I saluted him as a brother pescador, and he showed me his flies. They were home-made, but neater and smaller than those tied by the anglers of Matarosa. The man was not very communicative, but perhaps he could not understand my Spanish.

By the river, which is wide at Orense, flowing rather sedately over a gravel bed, we saw some

men baiting lines, which they threw out into the stream. I asked them what they caught, and they replied : ' Principally eels.'

Our next halt was at Rivadavia, a queer little town on a hillside, at the confluence of the Avia and Minho. An electrical engineer who was staying at the fonda could speak some English. This gentleman knew very little about the fishing in the neighbourhood, but he said that trout could be caught in the Avia. This charming river rises in the north-east of the province of Orense. I cannot, however, recommend it from any other point of view but the scenic. We had one day along its pretty, verdant banks, but it was blank so far as the fishing was concerned. In appearance the stream is very alluring. It is shallow, clear, and abounding in runs that ought to be full of trout. We soon arrived at the view that the stream had been poached to the decimation of trout. Not a rise was seen to our flies after five hours' fishing upstream. I fear that the Avia—in its lower lengths, at any rate—is a ruined river. At a ferry a boatman hailed us, and I asked him if there were any fish left in the stream.

' Very few,' he said, shaking his head regretfully.

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And I gathered that the net had been used for years past. Still, the beauty of the river tempted us on, and we had our repast upon a green islet in a charming reach, with Rivadavia in the distance perched on its hillside.

As we were skirting a cultivated field, two girls, who were at work with hoes, suddenly caught sight of us. With a scream they flung down their tools and ran as though for their lives. We stood to watch their flight, wondering at the cause of their scare. Possibly they fancied that we were evil spirits. The Galicians are very superstitious. Our fishing costumes no doubt enhanced their terror, for they had never seen the human form in such fantastic attire.

It was useless to remain at Rivadavia if we wished to catch fish. Therefore we paid our score at the fonda the next morning, and took train to the village of Arbó, a few leagues lower down the Minho. Arbó has a station overhanging the rushing river, whose torrent here is almost deafening in its roar. A very rustic inn and a few houses cluster around the railway-station. Across the river are groves and a few cultivated fields below the gray mountain ranges of Northern Portugal. It is a lovely retreat in the midst of some of the

grandest scenery on the Minho. I think we were asked about half a crown each for a day's board and lodging. I know that these were the cheapest quarters that we found in the course of our wanderings in Spain and Portugal.

The room commanded a grand panorama of the mountains and the river-valley. We made shift with a few hardships, for the people were kind and attentive, and the scenery compensated for the roughness of the lodging. Moreover, we had a good day with the trout of a lovely tributary which joins the Minho about a mile above the hamlet. Mr. L., our friend at Los Pearas, had fished there some years before, and the hostess remembered him.

‘Yes, he was the English caballero who threw in all the little truchas, and only kept the big ones.’

I think the landlady feared that we might lose ourselves in the Galician wilds, for she insisted upon our being accompanied by her daughter of fourteen. The girl was small for her age, dark-eyed, olive-hued, and intelligent. She attired herself in festal costume, and had an exceptionally bright handkerchief upon her head. Her meal was wrapped in a handkerchief. She was soon

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joined by a ragged boy, who assisted in carrying our wading-stockings and brogues, and played the cavalier very prettily to the daughter of the inn.

We reached the stream at its meeting with the Minho in a charming shady glen. Vines were trellised along the banks of the burn, and the chestnut-trees cast their shadow over the golden shallows. In a pool below a fall I saw several small trout rise to flies, and bogas were snapping at every insect that floated down. We caught no monsters in this fairy glen. The trout were nimble and golden, but the biggest that I saw would probably not weigh more than $\frac{1}{2}$ pound. We caught some quarter-pounders and a number of troutlets and bogas, much to the delight and excitement of our young friends. The scenery was exquisite beyond description. We rested by a waterfall beneath the trees, close to a quaint mill. Women were washing clothes in a tributary brook. It was a delightful picture. The children dabbled barefooted in the river; the gay colours of the girl's dress gave life and beauty to the scene of gray rock, drooping boughs, and tumbling water.

The heat at mid-day was almost insupportable. We were glad to escape for a time from the sun's

scorching rays, and to rest in the inn until the shadows of the mountains fell across the Minho. Then we went down to the mouth of the tributary. The evening was peaceful, and a lingering golden light rested upon the Minho. We forded the burn near its mouth, and made our way by the brawling main river, by whirling rapids and weird, sombre pools, till we reached a kind of weir, built of stone. There were narrow channels for the current to flow through, and in each of these was a fixed bag-net, shaped like an eel-basket. These traps were set for the sábalos, or shad.

Below the weir was a shallow glide, broad and fairly swift, with trailing weed growing from the gravel. This seemed a likely haunt of trout. I cast upstream. A rise! I cast again and hooked a fish. He swam for the weeds, and fought bravely, though not with the strength of a trout. When I brought him to the bankside, I saw that I had caught an escaló of about $\frac{3}{4}$ pound. He was a coarse, dull-looking fish, not unlike our British chub.

A shout from my wife brought me to her side. She was wading in a sharp scour, and had hooked a heavy fish. I have never seen the little greenheart

rod bend as it did at that moment. The fish had rushed into midstream.

‘Let him run!’ I cried. ‘He’s a grand fish, whatever he is!’

The rod still bent almost double, though the line was flying from the winch. A splash broke the water 20 yards away, a splash that set our hearts beating. Mercy, what a fish! Was it a salmon, a shad, or one of the mighty Minho trout? We shall never know. The rod flew back to the straight, and the line came mournfully limp to the bank. A grand fish lost! My wife was breathless.

I returned to my run below the weir. The escalos were madly on the rise. They came up two and three at a time, and contended with each other for my flies. I pulled them out as fast as I could cast, escalos of $\frac{1}{2}$ pound, and bogas weighing rather less. The bank was strewn with them; the stream bubbled with rises. I believe I could have filled a sack with these rapacious fish had I stayed for an hour at the weir. But my wife’s adventure with the big fish stimulated me to try the fly over the scour below.

Darkness was creeping over the hills. The weird, sombre pools were black. I fished down to the

ford across the burn, picking up bogas and escalos as I went. From the small stream I took a few trout. None of them were more than $\frac{1}{2}$ pound.

It was almost too dark to see our flies upon the water. We tried to ford the tributary, but our feet sank in the ooze, and we had to retreat to the bank.

Where was the crossing-place? It was difficult to find it in the gathering gloom. At last we had to tramp up to a railway-bridge that spanned the river. We found the track through the trellises of vines that led to the terraced highroad. Owls called from the chestnut glades, and large dusky moths flitted by. We could still see the peaks of the mountains of Portugal. The night breeze brought the cry of the river, and as we neared the dim lights of the hamlet of Arbó, we heard a peasant troling a Galician ditty. He sang of the joys of the bandit's life. Truly, we were in a country of beauty, adventure, and romance.

CHAPTER XVII

THE SHAD OF ARBÓ

SHAD-FISHING in inland waters is still a flourishing industry in the Valley of the Minho, and every riverside hamlet has its pescadores, who live by netting and snaring the fish during the warm months of the year. We spent several days among the fisher-folk of the upper lengths of the Minho, and watched their modes of capturing shad.

At Arbó there is a little colony of shad fishermen, who have erected solid stone piers, about a yard apart, across the Minho, with channels between them for the passage of fish. In each of these artificial channels, or guts, a trap-net with a large aperture, and tapering almost to a point at the end, is set and secured by chains.

One of these trapping-places on the Spanish side of the river had three piers, built at a height of about 10 feet above the green, rushing water.

It was the fishery of the village padre, who spent many hours of each day upon the piers, smoking scores of cigarettes, and occasionally raising one of his traps to see whether a fish had entered it.

The priest was one of the most successful fishermen in the village. Now and again he caught a brace of shad in one net, and it was interesting to watch him lift out the great silvery fish on to the pier, skip nimbly with his burden over the stones, and lay his captures in the shade of a big tree. Surveying the shad with an expression of delight, he would light another cigarette, wash his hands with sand and water, and return to his platform, to lower the net again, and to await the advent of another shoal of migratory fish.

My friend the padre knew the ways of shad, and held the opinion that the mouth of the net should be concealed partially by a green bough. He was always careful to adjust the bough before sinking the trap; and as he appeared to take more fish than his neighbour on the Portuguese bank of the river, this precaution may have been the secret of his success.

He told me that the green branch looked like a water-weed to a travelling shad, and that the fish swam without suspicion through the twigs and

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into the net. I noticed that in most cases the shad were dead when taken from the trap. No doubt the pressure of the powerful current, combined with their inability to open freely their gills in the small end of the bag-net, soon suffocated the struggling fish.

The padre, and a carabinero who was on the watch for contrabandists from Portugal, were much amused when I said that I would like to take a photograph of two freshly-caught shad to show to my friends in England.

No bait has been yet discovered which will lure shad from the Minho. I asked the natives whether anyone had ever caught a shad with any sort of natural or artificial bait. 'No, nada, nada!' There is apparently no known bait for the Minho shad. But in the Guadalquivir, at Cordova and Seville, these fish will take various baits.

Shad can be attracted to the surface by bright lights used at night. As the fish come up, dazed and off their guard, they are scooped out in large landing-nets. I should say that the sábalos of the Minho average about 4 pounds in weight, but they are taken up to 12 pounds. May and June are the months when the shad most

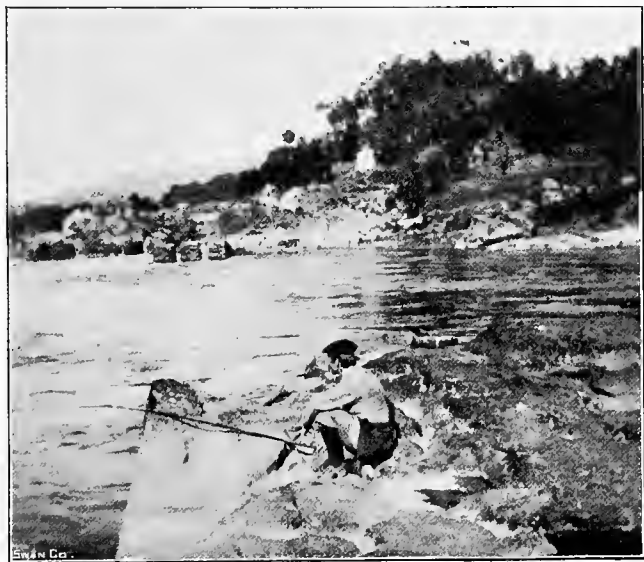
resort to the upper pools of the river. We had shad for dinner at Arbó and elsewhere. The flesh is of a delicate flavour, but one must exercise caution to avoid swallowing the small bones. Sábalo is a favourite dish in Spain and Portugal. It is served up cold, with sliced onions and spices.

It requires some agility to skip from one of the piers to another. They are only about a yard or 4 feet apart, but the wild current flows deep and swift between them, and a false step or a stumble would send the luckless fisherman into a fierce rush of water, that would buffet and toss the most powerful swimmer, and probably suck him down. It makes one almost giddy to stand on one of these towers or piers, watching the hurrying torrent that breaks against them, and flows through the channels in a green shoot of water. Lowering and raising the trap-nets are operations attended with peril. The nets are secured to the stonework with chains. These piers are made wedge-shaped, to break the force of the stream.

As I have never seen an English shad, I cannot say whether the shad of Spain differ in any way from our own. The Welsh name for the

fish is ysgadan, *i.e.*, herring ; for shad are very near relatives to the herring, if they are not actually the same fish. The two kinds of shad that frequent parts of our coast, and ascend some of the rivers to spawn, are known as the twaite and the allice. Now, twaite are taken with the rod and line, and it is curious that the shad of the Minho cannot be tempted with baits. If I lived by the banks of that stream, I would spend some time in endeavouring to lure sábalo to the hook. Surely there must be some dainty morsel or another that would induce shad to overcome their indifference. The sport with these Minho shad would be exciting. I handled a brace of sábalo taken from the padre's net, and one of them was between 8 and 9 pounds, while the other was about 10 pounds in weight. In these heavy waters such big fish would make a mighty struggle for liberty, when hooked by an angler.

I tried lobworms on a leger, one hot afternoon, at Arbó. The rocks by the Minho were so scorching that I believe one could have fried bacon upon them. There was not a stray breath of wind moving, nor was there any shade by the big pool below the village. The strain of the current on my line bent the middle and top joints of a



BOTTOM FISHING IN THE MINHO.

salmon-rod, and a very heavy bullet was needed to keep the bait on the bottom. I had not waited for many minutes, when there was a sharp jerk at the rod-top. Seizing the butt, I struck sharply. But I was too late; the fish had dropped the bait. I threw in again, and kept the line between my finger and thumb. Another tug! I struck again, and felt the plunging of a fish.

‘It can scarcely be a shad,’ I thought as I wound in the line.

It was not a shad. Our experience of attempted shad-fishing on the Guadalquivir was renewed. My capture was an eel, weighing about $\frac{1}{2}$ pound. I threw the wriggling beast to a boy who was watching me, and put on a fresh lobworm. Eels, nothing but eels, came to my hook. I could have caught a dozen or so of these small eels. However, three contented me. There seemed no likelihood of catching a shad. My seat on the shelving rock was almost as hot as the grill of a West End restaurant.

I went panting to the shade, and flung myself upon the green grass. Bogas were rising to flies in the bay before me. Swifts skimmed to and fro. Beyond the roaring, swirling, foaming Minho, the

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stern mountain heights of Portugal seemed to touch the burning blue sky. The padre stood on his tower in the river, watching his nets, and the soldier was at his lookout, smoking a cigarette. It was our last afternoon at beautiful Arbó.

CHAPTER XVIII

AROUND TUY

TUY is a small picturesque town on the Spanish bank of the Minho, about fifteen miles from what George Borrow would term 'the disembogement' of that river into the ocean. As 'disembogue' is used by the classic Addison, we need not quarrel with the word, which is certainly a goodly one upon the tongue and a long one to write. Before disemboguing itself, the Minho flows in a serener mood through a fertile valley, bounded by the hills of Pontevedra in Spain and the ranges of Northern Portugal.

Tuy has a grand position for a view of the river and the hills. Richard Ford says that the town is a fishing-place. It is certainly well supplied with netsmen, but the Minho at Tuy does not invite the rod fisherman.

A few letters were awaiting us at the post-office. The official was gracious and attentive.

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‘You have much correspondence,’ he said, with a bow.

If the receipt of three or four letters constitutes a claim to social distinction, we were certainly persons of importance. I dare say the good man mistook me for another rich mining speculator, fresh from opulent Britain, and all agog to buy up a mountain-side. Let it be said, however, that had he known us for two literary folk, the postmaster would have shown us no less respect. Spain is one of those lamentably improgressive and uncommercial countries where the artist, the author, and the journalist, be they even unable to keep a gig or a motor-cycle, are still esteemed as worthy and profitable members of the community. Time may correct this tendency towards misplaced respect. ‘Literature, reading!’ sneered a Jew merchant of London in my hearing. ‘My friend, the best reading for me is on cheques and five-pound notes!’ Well, such frank Philistinism as that is superb. In Spain, by the way, the paper-money bears the portraits of men of letters and painters.

Our reception at the fonda of Tuy was less agreeable than the interview with the postmaster. Perhaps the hostess and her daughters suspected us for Portuguese immigrants. They do not love

their neighbours in Tuy. At any rate, we were refused luncheon to take out with us on a fishing excursion. Such an innovation was appalling. Dios ! we must be mad to ask for such a favour ! However, there are caballeros and señoras in Tuy. I found a very polite Civil Guard in a café.

‘ Señor,’ I said, ‘ I am an English stranger, and a fisherman for recreation. Can you tell me where I can catch trout hereabouts ?’

The officer reflected for a moment.

‘ Yes, certainly I know where there are truchas,’ he replied.

We were counselled to follow the highroad to the east, for a mile or so, until we reached a bridge over a stream. That was the river for trout. The designation Civil Guard is a fair one. These smart, intelligent, and obliging custodians of life and property are a credit to Spain. They are ex-soldiers of high character, trained to arms, and used to discipline. By their efforts the country has been almost freed from the terror of a powerfully organized brigandage. These guards often showed us kindness and rendered ready service. Upon the only occasion when I offered one of them a ‘ tip,’ he politely replied that it was against the rules to accept any reward from the public.

Upon the morning of the day following our arrival at this curious little border town, we went out early to find the stream to which the Civil Guard had directed us. Although the hour was eight, and the sun had not reached its highest point in the dazzling sky, the heat was great, and the exertion of walking and carrying our fishing paraphernalia was not wholly enjoyable. The road lay straight and glaring before us, and there was no shade on either side. We were glad to find ourselves in a bosky glade by the green banks of a singularly limpid stream. The verdure was fresh and restful to the eyes. Chestnut and aspen trees formed a forest in a secluded vale. There was no track by the river. We made a path through ferns and sedgy swamps, and looked for an open length of the translucent stream whereon we might cast a fly. But the banks were thickly grown with trees and plants, and there seemed very little chance of fly fishing. However, with short lines, we cut in under the trees, and fished upstream.

The omnipresent boga rose at once, though not in a ravenous manner. On a golden shoal, a few fish flashed to the bank before I could cast. They may have been trout. I cannot say that I saw a single trout in this delightful little river, though it

was well adapted for the nimble trucha. Besides bogas, we noted some red-finned fish that looked like roach. But even these were easily scared by our approach, for the river was one of the clearest I have ever seen, and the sunshine through the boughs revealed every stone upon its bed.

Golden orioles were numerous in this wooded vale. We heard their voices on either side of the stream. Wood doves cooed softly in the tall trees, and a kingfisher shot down the water's edge. Jays screeched an alarm note as we invaded the solitude of this lovely woodland, and plunged into its most secret dingles.

Fishing was futile. The sky was of the deepest, hottest blue, and the heat was increasing. We sat down on the sward close to the stream and listened to the golden orioles and the doves. Suddenly I observed a swelling wave in the clear, shallow pool at our feet. The wave sped across the river and lapped the bank. Then up came the head and shoulders of a large otter. He looked us full in the face for an instant, and with a plunge, he sank back and swam rapidly away under the water. No doubt he had intended to land on our side of the stream, for he came straight across from the opposite bank. The presence of an otter in the

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stream proved that it held fair-sized fish, though probably the creature's chief prey would be eels and frogs.

‘ A blank day, but a pleasant one,’ I said as we turned away from the river. ‘ Times have changed for anglers at Tuy since Richard Ford wrote his “ Handbook for Spain.” ’

CHAPTER XIX

JUNE DAYS IN LUSITANIA

BRIGHT sunshine accompanied us into Portugal. We were nearing the longest day, and the weather was hopelessly 'settled.' Think of it, luckless Londoners, in the murky alleys east of St. Paul's ! While you were languishing for warmth and sunlight we were inclined to rail at the clear skies and the benignant sun. Well, the fates were rather cynical. As soon as we reached a big town, such as Oporto, for example, down came the rain steadily, and we had visions of freshened rivers alive with rising trout. When we returned to the wilds, the weather changed at once to fair and cloudless, the rivers ran down to a low level, and became finer every day, and trout hid themselves and were coy.

North Portugal is Paradise. We speak of it as we found it in this golden June weather. And, honestly, is there any other part of Europe where

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the mass of the people enjoy a serener life ? I am told that the Italians are more gay. The capacity for exuberant joyousness is not so manifest in the Portuguese race. But in the enjoyment of a quiet, even happiness the rural folk of Portugal appear to be the most highly blessed among the peasantry of the Continent. This is, perhaps, not the occasion for tracing the source of this sweet contentment. It is due to climate, environment, temperament, and, by no means least, to the system of land tenure. These people are yeomen, stout, independent, and cheerful in the tilling and improving of a soil in which they realize that they possess a share. If anyone wishes for a sunny picture of the peasant proprietor's life, he will find it in the province of Entre-Douro-e-Minho, to the north of Oporto.

We entered Portugal at Caminha, at the mouth of the broad Minho. The chief river is joined here by several minor streams, which flow down from the mountains on either side of the noble estuary. Barmouth and the Mawddach estuary will give an idea of the view at Caminha on a smaller scale. Salmon, shad, and other fish are netted here to a considerable extent. The salmon-fishing is, however, decaying, and I think that

the cause must be sought in the overnetting, the destruction of parr by netsmen and rod anglers, and the depredations of poachers in the higher pools of the river. Pollution of the water is certainly not accountable for the diminution of salmon, for the Minho is pure from its source to the sea. Few rivers in Europe could vie with this in the production of salmon if proper preservation was enforced.

At the railway-station, as we stepped from the train, two women took possession of our bags and fishing-rods. One of them was a perfect example of Portuguese loveliness. She had dark brown hair under her pink head-kerchief, a pair of merry and tender brown eyes, an olive, golden skin, neither ruddy nor sallow, and well-shaped features. I felt ashamed when these women, who are employed as porters, poised our bags on their graceful heads and strode off to the town. It is difficult to overcome one's prejudice against heavy labour for women. And yet these Portuguese women certainly do not appear to suffer in health, nor to lose their physical charm, through active muscular exertion. I tried to take the rods from one of the women. It was of no use; they would not allow us to carry a single article. Walking

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swiftly and gracefully on their shapely bare feet, they preceded us up the road, laughing and chatting together.

We learned that the beauty was a sailor's wife. The good man was on a long voyage to South America. Was she dependent upon her earnings as a porter? She seemed well nourished and cheerful. As I spoke not a word of Portuguese, I left the women to use their own judgment in selecting a fonda. They led us to a house in the main-street of sleepy-looking shops, and went up a staircase. The hostess could not speak much Spanish, but we contrived to make terms, and I paid the porters. The handsome woman said something to the hostess, and I gathered that she was offering to take us to the house of a British resident. We agreed to this, but informed the landlady that we would like a meal as soon as possible.

The Portuguese fare better, on the whole, than their Spanish neighbours. After crossing the border from the plains of Salamanca, and through the stony defiles of the Douro, one is struck by the richness of the vegetation in Northern Portugal. It is almost like entering the tropics. The sheltered vales are green, the slopes are

grown with vines and fruit-trees, and the gardens are well tilled and productive. Fruit was ripe in the orchards. We feasted upon huge strawberries and beautiful cherries.

The Portuguese bed is a curiosity. It is about a foot from the floor, very spacious, and as hard as a stone. The bedding seems to be stuffed tightly with sawdust or chaff, and the pillows are unyielding. No doubt such couches are the most healthy, but they are not luxurious. One arises with a bruised sensation in the muscles. It is different in Spain, where the spring-beds are exceedingly comfortable.

After dinner we found our guide waiting to conduct us to the house of the British resident. She led us along the main-street to a side-thoroughfare of good houses. The street was clean and bright, and the dwellings were picturesque. A charming lady received us, and spoke in our own tongue. How strange it seemed to hear English spoken! Her husband was not in, but he would be pleased to see us. We were invited to return later on in the evening.

We ascended a hill, and saw the sun sinking in the ocean. It was a serene summer's evening, and the sea was blue and still as far as the eye could

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reach. Shadows lay in the coombs sloping down from the stern hills, and across the salt flats, where cattle were roaming. The air was perfumed with wild-thyme and the salt odour of the sea. We could trace the Minho from a dark gorge to its meeting with the ocean, and on the wide estuary were the craft of fishermen. The burden of a plaintive song reached us from a cottage below the knoll.

The evening was spent in the company of the British resident, his family, and the family of an English Protestant missionary. Everyone spoke in English, and we passed a pleasant time. The world goes very well at Caminha. There is no bustle, no sordid strife to grow rich, and no palpable want among the poorer people. One could live very contentedly at Caminha with a sailing boat, a gun, and a fishing-rod. There are several trout-streams within reach of the little town, besides sea-fishing. The estuary would afford fine sailing, and the roads are very fair for cycling. There is wild-fowling in the district, and rough shooting on the mountains.

As for the climate, it is never very cold, and the heat at midsummer is tempered with breezes from the Atlantic. There is a fair rainfall in North

Portugal, which tends to keep the country fresh and green. The rain is heavy while it falls, and the weather soon clears. It is not 'chronic,' as an Englishman remarked, when describing the rainfall of our country during 1903-4. Then, the air! It is enticing, odorous, and health-giving, a happy blend of sea and mountain breezes.

The Romans were completely reconciled to their existence in this peaceful region of Lusitania. They found a land like to their own, a land flowing with wine and glowing with sunshine. The conquerors settled in the happy vales, and felt no yearning for the country of their birth. Bacchus and his friend Lusus came here and founded a colony. The juice of the grape ran from the press in a purple stream; they discovered an elysium, and called it Lusitania, the land of Lusus. Mr. Oswald Crawford tells us that the Portuguese have preserved the traditions, the legends, and the speech of the Romans. 'Sonnets have been written in Portuguese that will pass for Latin,' says this author.

But I have wandered from the gathering of British compatriots in the house of Mr. F. at Caminha. Our host was in charge of the Atlantic cable off this coast. He told us of the breakages

that sometimes occur, when the mighty wire link between the continents is not strong enough to resist the ceaseless assault of 'the multitudinous seas.' Our imagination could scarcely convey an idea of the tedious and difficult operation of repairing this girdle round the earth. It was altogether too big a matter for our lay intelligence. The men who lay cables, and build railways, and construct viaducts, seem to me almost superhuman beings in their daring and skill. One should be humble in their presence.

A few years ago, there lived at Caminha a gentleman who held the post of British Vice-Consul. He was a keen angler. I had heard of him in Avila, and we hoped to make his acquaintance. Unfortunately, he had left Portugal. Mr. F. knew him well, and described his enthusiasm for trout-fishing. He related how Mr. S. would tramp many miles to throw a fly on one of the numerous clear streams that water this glorious territory. There was no one who knew more about the fishing in the neighbourhood than Mr. S.

One day this angler was fishing a stream, a few leagues from Caminha, when a wild-boar thrust his head over a projecting crag, and had a good steady stare at the invader of his solitary domain.

Mr. S. wished that a gun instead of a rod had been in his hand at that moment.

To the south of Caminha is the port of Vianna de Castello, at the mouth of the Rio Lima. Mr. Edward Dodgson, who has left very few corners of the Peninsula unexplored, tells me that he has walked the whole length of the beautiful Lima Valley. He describes the scenery as enchanting. There are trout in the river. The boys of the villages spend their summer days in the pastime of diving for trout. Now, diving for pearls is one thing, but pursuing trout under water, after the fashion of the otter, is another affair. My readers will tax me with drawing the longbow, and attempting to palm off travellers' tales upon them. Well, Mr. Dodgson was disposed to discredit the story of these human otters, until he saw them with his own eyes. And if further evidence is necessary, let me refer the curious to an interesting account of this mode of fish-capture contained in Mr. Oswald Crawford's 'Round the Calendar in Portugal,' pp. 24, 25, and also to an illustration of this primitive trout-fishing in the same volume.

These amphibious Portuguese peasant lads are just expert trout-ticklers, plus a cultivated capacity for remaining many seconds under the water.

Any fairly strong diver can bring up half a dozen stones from the bottom of a pool 10 feet deep. An adept at trout-groping can secure his fish during an equal lapse of seconds. The scared trout make for the ledges, and holts under boulders, and the diver deftly tickles and catches them.

Between Caminha and Vianna are the villages of Ancora, Affife, and Arcosa, all upon the railway. Each of these places is beautiful. The coast is bright, with reefs, sandy bays, fishermen's cots, and vineyards and grain-fields down to the verge of the ocean. From the shore rise heathy hills, and bold bluffs project to the sea. At the villages are boarding-houses, which provide lodging for summer visitors from Oporto. The limitless ocean thunders along this coast in stormy weather, changing its colour from violet to blue, and from blue to green. Many a fisher-lad has gazed across the foam, and yearned to follow in the track of the bold adventurers of old, whose passion for exploring built up the prosperity of Portugal.

In the river of Ancora there are big trout. It is a clear stream, flowing through a district of woodland, orchard, and vineyard in its middle and

lower lengths, while its upper waters run between uncultivated slopes and open banks. Mr. F.'s son kindly offered to accompany us to the Ancora River, where he had fished once or twice. It was a favourite stream of the aforementioned Vice-Consul.

We took train to Ancora on a hot afternoon, carrying our waders with us. A young man of the village was engaged to bear our traps, and we threaded our way through luxuriant vines and fruit-trees to the sparkling river. I was soon wading in a pool below a weir, where a few small trout rose lazily to my flies. Blazing sunlight fell upon the river, and fish could be seen darting from the shallows. My wife made photographs of two picturesque peasant women as we roamed along the well-cultivated banks. At a farm we bought about a dozen oranges for a copper coin, and slaked our thirst with their grateful juice.

We came to a swift, narrow shallow, with high banks on either side. Some good trout were rising here. I cast over them, and hooked a small one immediately. Then I played and lost a nice trout of quite a pound in weight. After this mishap the run only afforded bogas, which rose

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hungrily. A little further up the river we caught two or three more small trout.

A boy came down the stream, and bargained for an artificial fly in exchange for a quantity of cherries. Our guide had already gathered a number of cherries from an orchard, after obtaining the ready permission of the woman who owned it. We had fruit galore that afternoon. We were not so fortunate in obtaining trout. The sunshine was remorseless, and the fish were exceedingly shy. Nevertheless, the Ancora River should show good sport in favourable weather, and I believe that there are plenty of fish in its higher lengths.

It was growing dark when we returned to Ancora, whence we decided to follow the high-road to Caminha. Our gilly diverted us on the way back by his rigorous endeavour to save us the annoyance of being followed by inquisitive urchins. Whenever a boy left his play and his companions to join our party, the vigilant youth promptly dealt him a stroke with the handle of the landing-net. One after another these youngsters dropped back, with their sleeves to their eyes, uttering loud wails at the attack of our body-guard. I must say that we were not willing

accessories to this assault and battery. The offence was not serious enough to merit chastisement. But it appeared to be done in our service and for our comfort, like the charge of police to clear the roadway when a pageant is approaching.

After leaving Ancora we met several parties of field-labourers, men and women, returning from their day's toil. How gay and artistic was their dress, and how comely were the wholesome tawny and olive faces! They stopped their singing to wish us good-night, and resumed the ballad as they strode on, their voices dying away at a bend in the road. This is a land that makes one glad, a climate that inspires to song. Almost every lad can play on the guitar or the mandolin, and all the swains and lasses know how to dance gracefully. Perhaps the England of Herrick's day was like this, 'a nest of singing-birds,' a country with a peasantry of whom it might without satire be written in the words of Gray: 'How jocund did they drive their team afield!'

We went on, in the growing darkness, by the sound of the waves, through gloomy fir-woods, where the gnome-calls of owls aroused the heavy, brooding stillness. The sky quivered with the lights of millions of stars. From the swamps came the

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continuous rumbling chorus of the big green frogs, and in the thickets night-birds lifted a few sweet treble notes to this sonorous bass. What a rare and beautiful night ! It seemed sinful to leave this loveliness to the stars, and to shut out the scene from our room. When shall we revel again in the witchery of a midsummer night in Lusitania ?

But we were tired from the heat and the exertion of the long day. The last mile seemed lengthy, and we were glad to see the lights of Caminha and the dark broad estuary under the starry sky.

The tributary that joins the Minho on the left bank at Caminha is tidal in its lower length. For a mile or two it winds through salt-marshes, the resort of snipe in the winter, but higher up it flows through a wild ravine, and forms several fine falls. The pools below these cascades are full of trout. They can hardly be reached on foot, but vehicles can be hired cheaply in Caminha.

We did not fish the Lima, but I heard it well recommended as a trout-stream. In its lower reaches this river is navigable. The Lima rises in Spain, in the province of Orense, near the town of Sandianes, where there is a large laguna. It enters Portugal at Lindoso, and at Ponte de Lima the angler will find quarters. The scenery of this

river-valley is superb, and the people are hospitable and very picturesque. A number of streams flow to the sea between Caminha and Oporto, and in most of them the fly fisherman may expect sport. South of Oporto is Oliveira, a little town in a well-watered region. There are several trout-streams within reach of Oliveira, which is mentioned as a fishing-resort in 'Round the Calendar in Portugal' by Mr. Oswald Crawford.

CHAPTER XX

TROUT STREAMS AND COARSE FISH RIVERS

OPORTO is one of the most beautiful cities in Europe. It has won from Camoens the title of 'the Proud,' and it deserves the distinction. The position of the city is romantic, at the widening of the gorge of the wild Douro, and commanding wide prospects of the Atlantic Ocean, purple mountains, and luxuriant vineyards, grain-fields and groves. Terrace rises above terrace on the sides of the ravine, and a handsome suspension-bridge spans the brown river.

We spent three days in the Wine City, and made a trip to the sea at São João da Foz, a village recalling the minor watering-places of our own South Coast. The day was stormy, and the waves broke high at the perilous bar at the mouth of the Douro, while black clouds broke at intervals, and rain fell with a roar upon this wind-beaten shore.

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Our fishing-tackle had suffered considerable dilapidation during our tour. Four months of hard wear had worn holes in my canvas brogues, which were well seasoned at the beginning of our peregrination, having done much work in Wales and Yorkshire. At Seville I took the brogues to a shoemaker in the Plaza de la Constitucion, who announced on a sign, in English, that boots were 'repaired with invisible patches.' This son of St. Crispin was an excellent workman. He put the neatest of patches on the canvas, stitched up the leather soles, and pipe-clayed the brogues. The leather parts he painted and varnished. I suppose the good man thought that these shoes were for street and park wear, a new style in English footgear, for he took great pains to make the worn-out brogues look smart. When I told him that they were for use in the water, he shook his head in utter mystification, and remarked that he 'could not understand.' His charge was most moderate, and he actually insisted upon presenting me with a pair of old wooden lasts upon which he had carefully stretched the brogues.

I tried to make good some of our losses in tackle while we were in Oporto. There is tackle on sale at a toy-shop in one of the chief streets.

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Fishing-tackle and toys go together in the Peninsula, which suggests that the angler is regarded as a child needing a plaything rather than as a sportsman requiring serviceable paraphernalia. The selection of fishing-tackle in Oportó was of the poorest description. Who dumps this inferior tackle into Spain and Portugal? It is not made locally. One might suppose that gut is plentiful, good, and cheap in Spain. I can only say that the fisherman will regret it, if he fails to take his own casts and flies into the country. Most of the gut used throughout the world is produced in Spain, where its manufacture is a big and thriving industry. Yet I could not buy a decent cast in the country. You see hanks of gut displayed occasionally in the windows of grocers' shops in the large towns. It is coarse and of inferior quality; there is apparently no local demand for medium and fine gut. The hooks that I bought in Spain and Portugal were about No. 5 size, according to the new scale, and mounted upon gut strong enough to lift a five-pound fish. These are supplied for trout-fishing. They are useless in a clear river, and too big under any conditions. The high quality of our English-made fishing-tackle excited the admiration and

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envy of the pescadores in all parts of the Peninsula. More than once I was asked if I would sell some flies.

The fisherman can enjoy all-round sport in Portugal and in some parts of Spain. From Oporto he can reach by the railway many trout-streams, and rivers abounding with barbel, bogas and escalos. The Douro is perhaps the finest river for barbel-fishing to be found in Europe. The Spanish and Portuguese barbel is somewhat different from our barbel of the Trent and Thames. It is a handsomer fish, and not so coarse. You see barbel exposed in many of the markets, and they are fairly good eating. When freshly caught, the Spanish barbel is more golden in colour on the underside than our own, and the scales are less thick. I am unable to give the Latin name for the barbel of Spain and Portugal.

In travelling from Salamanca to Oporto the railway ride is through the Valley of the Douro. This swirling brown stream teems with barbel in many of its lengths. At the frontier town of Barco d'Alva, where one's luggage is examined, we were detained for about one hour at the little station in the savage ravine. Two officers searched our bags, and when they looked at the rods in their

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cases, they began to discuss with each other in an animated manner. By dint of a little Portuguese and a few phrases in Spanish, I learned from these gentlemen that the river below abounded with heavy barbel. They were both anglers. No doubt they fished with tight lines and long bamboo rods, after the fashion of the shad-fishers of Seville, for they spoke of losing many big fish in the rushing water.

‘How much is a rod like this?’ asked one of the officers, handling my salmon-rod with a keen interest.

I told him that such a rod would cost about 50 pesetas. He raised his eyebrows in astonishment, and passed the fishing-rod to his companion. They were evidently fascinated by the springiness and balance of the greenheart sixteen-footer. Such a rod had never been seen by them. I wrote down the address of the maker and gave it to the senior officer. I wonder whether he has become the possessor of an English fishing-rod? If so, he has probably brought a few of those big barbel to hand.

I would have liked to spend a few days at Barco d’Alva by the side of one of those eddying pools, with a leger and plenty of lobworms for ground bait. Barbel-fishing has occasionally come

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in my way, but I have never followed the sport with the real zest of the Thames enthusiast. Perhaps some of our barbel experts, who think nothing of spending a five-pound note upon two or three days' baiting and fishing in a Thames swim, may one day travel to the Douro, and show the natives how to lure and take the mighty fish of that river.

The river is deep, strong, and swift, with pools here and there that look very tempting to the coarse fisherman. In this rocky solitude and desolation many rare birds have their nesting-places among the crags. As the train runs on, you see only a hut or two for miles along the ravines. There is no overfishing here, and no well-educated barbel, but almost virgin water, and fish of an ingenuous nature, who would not sulk and turn up their noses at a lobworm.

I had one morning by the Douro at Zamora, in Spain, and tried for barbel with the orthodox leger. The river is wide here, and less eager than in its passage through the gorges of Portugal. It has the appearance of a good coarse fishing water, and I saw several anglers at work close to the town. They had the usual bamboo rods, coarse tackle, and rough, home-made floats. The

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favourite bait was a piece of cooked meat. One of these pescadores was fishing above the picturesque bridge below the walls of the town. I asked him what he caught, and he answered : ' Barbos.'

Barbel seem to be fairly plentiful here, for I saw them on the stalls in the market. I had no success in the swims that I tried above the bridge at Zamora. The morning was heavy and sultry, with thunder brewing. I sat in the broiling heat for about three hours, and during that time I had not so much as a nibble at my bait. Fish continually broke the surface of the water in my swim. What were they? The landlord of the hotel said that there were no truchas in the river, but these fish rose to flies. I tried in vain to catch sight of the rising fish. I was using my salmon-rod, so I changed the tackle, put on a cast of small flies, and whipped for these mysterious fish that rose to every passing insect. My effort to secure one of them failed, and my curiosity remains unsatisfied. Perhaps they were bogas, the irrepressible bogas that frequent most of the rivers of this part of the Peninsula.

A mighty river is this Douro. Rising in the province of Soria, it waters Old Castile and León, and flows westward to Portugal and the sea. It

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has numberless tributaries, and some of them are goodly rivers. Some of the affluents, such as the Tormes, have a reputation as trout-streams.

Our fishing experiences in Spain and Portugal came to an end in June, 1902. We had travelled many hundreds of miles in the Peninsula, fished in rivers good, indifferent, and bad, from the Basque Provinces to scorching Andalusia, and from Castile to León, Galicia, and Portugal. There are rivers almost innumerable that we did not visit, but of some of these I can speak from hearsay. In Asturias there are many trout-streams, watering this alpine and romantic kingdom, and falling into the Bay of Biscay. The Cares, the Navia, the Nalon, and the Eo, all contain trout. Passing into the province of Lugo, the angler will find several streams flowing both to the north and the south. Along the indented coast of Coruña many charming rivers meet the ocean, and I have heard good accounts of the fishing near Ferrol. At Carril and Vigo in Pontevedra there are also trout-streams not quite unknown to English anglers. At Vigo there are a fair number of British residents.

Richard Ford, in 'Murray's Handbook for Spain,' often refers to the salmon and trout rivers of the Peninsula. His information is not always reliable,

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for conditions have changed since he lived in Spain, and, moreover, one cannot be sure that he fished in any of the rivers which he describes. I do not wish to underrate this observant and entertaining writer, who possessed an intimate knowledge of Spanish people and places. But it is right to point out that his notes on fishing need revision. For example, Ford refers to the Minho as a splendid salmon-river, which indeed it ought to be, but at the present time it cannot be recommended to the angler.

Taking a line from the eastern slopes of the Pyrenees to Coruña, on the Atlantic Ocean, there are hundreds of wild streams producing more or less trout. Some of these rivers, as we have seen, contain plenty of fish, and in this northern district the fisherman will never find himself more than a league or so from a sport-yielding stream.

The Ebro waters the north-eastern region of Spain, and flows into the Mediterranean Sea to the south of Tarragona. Its source is in the province of Burgos, on the slopes of the Cantabrian Mountains. A tributary flows through the city of Burgos, and, upon the authority of a Spaniard, this stream holds big trout. Above Miranda, south-west of Vitoria, the Ebro is a good trout-river. This length, and other waters in the North of Spain, were

described in a series of fishing articles that appeared in the *Field* during 1901. There is little doubt that the rivers draining from the Pyrenees, on the Spanish side, would afford sport to the fly fisherman.

Travelling southwards from the mouth of the Ebro, we reach a river called the Mijares, or Millares, which waters the province of Teruel. Mr. Edward Dodgson, who knows the town of Teruel, tells me that there are trout in this river. I have no definite knowledge concerning the trout-fishing in the province of Granada, on the south coast. But I have been told by an English resident in Spain that the streams flowing from the Sierra Nevada contain plenty of trout. This wild and magnificent range, with its summits of over 11,000 feet, provides sport with the gun as well as with the fishing-rod.

The turbid Guadalquivir and the Tagus are coarse fishing rivers, though some of the tributaries of the Tagus, flowing into its higher reaches, produce trout. Rounding Cape St. Vincent, we soon approach Portugal, a land of many rivers, all of them containing fish of various kinds, from trout to barbel.

Among the fishing waters that I have not already mentioned are some streams in the

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neighbourhood of Pueblo de Tribes, in the province of Orense. If time had permitted, I would have visited this district, for I have a very encouraging report from an English angler concerning the trout of these rivers. To the south-east of this town, which is reached by coach from Rua Petin, on the Monforte line, is the Lago de Castanedd, which is said to provide excellent sport with big trout. Near the Pueblo de Sanabria, to the south-east of Castanedd, are several streams mentioned by Ford.

The angler who visits Spain will no doubt find the selection of his fishing streams somewhat perplexing, when he examines the map. Rivers abound in the north, in Portugal, and along the Mediterranean; they are traced in bewildering profusion upon the map of the Peninsula, and suggest unlimited exploration. I realize that we may have missed many good streams that flow along, or near to, our route. Years instead of months would be needed to explore thoroughly all the fishable waters of Spain and Portugal. The fisherman who cares to follow in our track may gain assistance from an epitomized sketch of a month's tour.

Let us suppose that you have arrived at Irun

from Paris. Stay one day in Irun, and book a place in the coach for Oyeregui on the following noon. From the Palacio Reparacea fish the Bidasoa for a week. Return to Irun. A long day's railway-ride will take you to Ampuero and Marron station on the Ason, viâ Bilbao, or you may break the journey, and try the Deva at the fourth station from San Sebastian. From Ampuero travel to Renedo, by way of Santander, a journey which will occupy the greater part of a day. Fish the Pas from Renedo, and proceed to Boñar on the railway from La Robla to Bilbao.

From Boñar journey to Ponferrada through León. Fish two days in the Sil at Ponferrada, engage a guide in the town, and take coach for Matarosa, higher up the river. Return by coach to Ponferrada, and take the train to Los Pearas beyond Orense. It will be advisable to write to Señor Vicente Sastre, Los Pearas, Provincia de Orense, to ascertain whether he has a vacant room.

This tour will absorb most of your month, unless you hurry from one place to another, regardless of the condition of the water. If the Ason was giving sport, it would be ill-advised to leave it quickly, though, on the other hand, if you devote too many days to one river, you will not

gain a knowledge of the country. Your own predilections and discretion must guide you. Let us imagine, however, that you have more than a month at your disposal. In that case you may continue your excursion into Portugal, fish the rivers between the mouth of the Minho and Oporto, and return to England by steamboat, or viâ Salamanca, Irun, and Paris, a journey of about fifty hours.

As an alternative route after your stay at Ponferrada, you may proceed to Villafranca del Bierzo, where report states that trout are abundant, and find your way by rail and coach from Lugo to the Eo, Navia and Nalon rivers in Asturias, and back to Irun by the line through Oviedo.

I cannot speak from personal knowledge of the rivers flowing from the Pyrenees on the Spanish side, nor of the numerous streams of Eastern Spain running into the Mediterranean Sea. I have heard that the sea-fishing is good near Barcelona and other ports upon this coast. There is plenty of sport for the sea-angler all around the shores of the Peninsula from the Bay of Biscay to the Atlantic, and in the Mediterranean.

CHAPTER XXI

A MIXED CREED OF PRACTICALITIES

AN angler writing for the instruction and guidance of brothers of the rod should never conceal his errors and failures, for, in the words of a half-remembered saw: 'By others' faults wise men amend their ways.' Therefore, if you are wise, you will not be misled, as I was, by the counsel of tackle-makers who tell you that very fine casts are necessary for the capture of the 'small trout' of Spain. These gentleman have never fished in the Peninsula. Their judgment is based upon the orders for tackle that they have received from Englishmen living principally in the South of Spain. I can only say that in the northern and central districts there are but few rivers of any importance that do not contain big trout. My losses include fish of 4 pounds in weight, hooked while fly fishing, and the heaviest trout brought to

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hand was 2 pounds. Trout weighing 1 pound are by no means uncommon in the Ason, the Pas, and tributaries of the Sil and Minho, while in these two main rivers trout grow to the weight of our heaviest ferox. A pound trout in the Sil fights like a demon, heads for tumbling water, tears out the reel-line, and gives more sport than a two-pounder in a chalk stream in England. You *may* be able to hold and tire him on a fine-drawn cast, and I dare say I shall be told that any fairly expert fisherman can do so. Let that be as you please; but, for my part, though I detest coarse tackle, I would not go again into Spain without gut strong enough to put a severe strain on two and three pound trout. In the chief rivers, where there is usually a full flow of water in the spring months, the hungry trout take the fly viciously, fight fiercely, and are not gut shy. Of course, in the small tributaries, during seasons of low-water, it is advisable to fish fine, and to have only one fly on the cast. But in the big rivers let your tackle be of the best, well tested, and only of medium fineness. For spinning in the Sil and Minho, you will require casts of the grilse strength.

Take a liberal supply of casts, or gut lengths,

with you. Do not forget spare swivels, Stewart hooks, shot, cobbler's wax, binding silk, thread, a spring-balance, and material and solution for mending wading-stockings. I will here give a list of the flies that proved the most attractive to the trout of Spain and Portugal. Those marked with an asterisk are hackle-dressed; the others are the ordinary winged patterns used for wet-fly fishing. I am not barring cock-winged, beautifully constructed dry flies. These may be taken, and I believe that they would do good work on the pools of many of the rivers, especially after the end of May.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Blue Dun (two sizes). | 8. Stone-Fly. |
| 2. March Brown (two sizes). | 9. Black Gnat. |
| 3. Olive Dun. | 10. Whirling Blue Dun. |
| 4. Ditto.* | 11. Partridge and Green |
| 5. Orange Dun.* | Body. |
| 6. Wickham's Fancy. | 12. Teal and Green Body. |
| 7. Red Quill Gnat. | 13. Dark Yellow Partridge. |

Nos. 11, 12, and 13 should be sea-trout or loch size. I am not aware that the Spanish salmon evince a preference for any specific pattern of fly. Ordinary salmon-flies in four or five dressings should be taken.

We now come to the question of the handiest rods. A sixteen-foot salmon-rod of greenheart or

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split cane will serve very well both for salmon and for the heavy trout of the Sil. There is such difference of taste among fishermen as to the length of a trout-rod that it will be better for the angler to use his own judgment. My own trout-rod was a rather heavy greenheart, 11 feet in length, while my wife used one of 10 feet, of lighter make. If the visitor does not object to encumbering himself with impedimenta, he may take an extra trout-rod. In any case he should have a second top joint. A short bottom-fishing rod may be taken for legering and coarse fishing. A long-handled landing-net, with a spike at the bottom, is an aid in preserving one's balance while wading on the rough beds of the strong Spanish streams. A gaff should not be forgotten. The best reel for spinning for big trout is a wooden Nottingham, with an optional check and line guard. This may also serve for salmon if the angler wishes to limit his paraphernalia. But if he prefers to use a metal check-reel for fly fishing for salmon he should take one. Two metal check-reels for trout-fishing should certainly form part of the kit. It is not absolutely essential to add another reel to the list for bottom fishing, but if the angler has any intention of fishing in the sea,

or trying his fortune with the big barbel of the Douro, he should provide himself with suitable winches. A creel is somewhat cumbrous when travelling. I prefer a bag of waterproof canvas or stout jean, which can be used as a haversack to carry a number of articles when moving from place to place. Unless the traveller is fortunate enough to possess a valet, he should study compactness and portability in the selection of his accoutrements.

Wading-trousers would be found useful, but they are exceedingly hot for wear in such a country as Spain. I contented myself with a pair of ordinary wading-stockings. These should be of good quality and as light as possible. Canvas brogues may be chosen in preference to those made of leather, as they weigh less and are easier to pack. My wife used a pair of the canvas and hemp-soled Basque shoes for wading. These wonderfully well-made shoes cost but eightpence a pair, and can be purchased in all parts of Spain. The soles grip fairly well upon slippery rocks, and the shoes are light to carry. If you wear out four pairs, you will only have spent about half a crown.

The choice of clothing is a matter of individual predilection. I wore a Burberry camel-hair knickerbocker suit, with Norfolk jacket fitted with four

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capacious pockets. The coat was unlined. The great essential is that the clothing should be light, and at the same time able to withstand hard wear. For ladies the skirt should be short, with a contrivance for raising it while wading. Short mackintosh coats to reach the waders will be required. For headgear there is nothing better than the gaberdine fishing-hats. They are light and cool, and a strong wind will not bear them away. The Spanish boina is light, but rather hot. Those who suffer from sun-glare may wear a Spanish sombrero of felt. A Panama straw hat is calculated to attract attention and comment. As Spanish women rarely wear hats, any form of feminine headgear will arouse interest. A pair of shooting-boots and a pair of a lighter make should be taken.

In travelling from one district to another in Spain, marked differences of temperature will be noticed. In the mountainous regions it is not safe to be without woollen underwear; for although the days are frequently very hot, the air chills rapidly after sundown. While journeying by rail and during a stay in the towns, fishing-clothes should be exchanged for an ordinary walking-suit. Ladies who wish to escape notice should not wear tailor-cut gowns and travelling-hats.

The pipe-smoker must learn to appreciate the flavour of the coarsely-cut Havana tobacco. Scarcely one man in a thousand in Spain smokes a pipe. Cigarettes are cheap, but they will scarcely suit the palate accustomed to fine brands of Egyptian and Virginian manufacture. The imported cigars are of good quality, but, owing to the heavy duty, they cost more than in England. English packet tobaccos can be bought in some of the towns at a very high price. A poor substitute for whisky is the spirit called caña. It is cheap and fiery. Cognac, or aguardiente, is tolerable, and very reasonable in cost. The ordinary table wines supplied with meals cannot be recommended, as many are 'doctored' with logwood. The Rioja, sold in sealed bottles at a moderate cost, is wholesome and agreeable. Excellent wines can be obtained in the towns. Good bottled cider is sold in the North. The Spanish beer (cerveza) resembles lager, and is bought in bottles. There are various kinds of aerated waters, and non-alcoholic syrups, known as refrescos. A favourite liqueur is anisette. I think I have already said enough about the cuisine to prepare the stranger for surprises agreeable and otherwise. Those who are not habituated to long fasting would be well

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advised to provide themselves with some portable form of concentrated food, such as Brand's beef lozenges.

It must be borne in mind that, even in the beaten track in Spain, English is rarely spoken, even at the big hotels. In the Basque provinces many of the better-educated people speak French. But this acquaintance with the French tongue noticeably declines as one travels South. A great deal can be accomplished in Spain by the use of a few phrases and gesticulation. There are several Spanish and English phrase-books, and the traveller should take one of these and a pocket dictionary. If possible, obtain a few lessons in the language before starting. This will aid in a right pronunciation. A knowledge of either Italian or Latin is of assistance in acquiring Spanish.

Dismiss from your mind all preconceptions anent the dishonesty of the Spanish people. It is difficult to account for the origin of this libel upon a fine and hospitable race. The popular and ignorant idea of the Spaniard is that of a swarthy hidalgo, ever ready to pick a quarrel and prone to resentment. As a matter of fact, the Spanish people are proud of the traditions of their race, and show a fine courtesy to the stranger who becomes their guest. Whenever we were brought

into personal relations with Spaniards of all classes, we encountered kindness and generosity. Never once in Spain, upon any pretext, was an extra peseta added to the stipulated charge at the fondas and casas de huespedes. Be assured that you will not be cheated in Spain. I may note here that the laundry work is excellent, and astonishingly cheap.

In Spain the title caballero is not dependent upon birth or station. The innkeeper equally with the duke is accorded the courtesy which he extends to others. Any assumption of social superiority should be strictly avoided in association with the people. Snobbery, the bane of human intercourse, is unknown in Spain. Politeness costs nothing, and yields an abundant return in esteem and ready service.

When engaging an attendant, it is well to accept the recommendation of the keeper of the fonda. When you ask your gillie, 'Cuanto pago para el dia?' (How much do I pay for the day?) you may be surprised to hear the answer, 'Nada' (Nothing). This is not to be accepted in its literal sense. It is merely equivalent to the British 'I leave it to you, sir.' A boy will be content with a peseta and his lunch. The lad will refuse to share the contents of your luncheon-bag unless you press the food

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upon him. This is a rule of his code of politeness. I have spoken before of the intelligence of the Spanish rustic. Without exception, I found my youthful gillies adaptable and helpful in leading me to the best lengths of water.

Before penetrating into the wildest regions, especially in the South, inquiries should be made at the quarters of the Civil Guard concerning a reliable guide, the accommodation, and the safety of the proposed route. Brigandage has been practically stamped out, but there are still one or two districts where highway robbers lie in wait for the unwary traveller.

The visitor to Spain should provide himself with a passport. In Barcelona the law enjoins that all passports shall be viséd by the Consul. Money may be taken in circular notes, which can be changed in most of the large towns. English Bank of England notes are accepted everywhere. The rate of exchange varies from day to day. Since the war with America it has been greatly in favour of the English traveller. In Portugal Spanish money can only be changed at a great loss, and the value of the exchange of British money in that country is much lower than in Spain.

CHAPTER XXII

THE SPANISH FISHERY LAW

ONE can imagine the consternation that would be caused in Spain if a law was enforced prohibiting the taking of fish from fresh-water by any other means save the rod and line. Such a law would be stubbornly resisted by the populace. The mass of the people in every country need education to the end of preserving their own interests, and in this respect Spain by no means stands alone. In our own country we have witnessed strong opposition to measures for the preservation of the fish of the Norfolk Broads, and the trout of the Scotch rivers, during the annual spawning period. In Wales the people are only just beginning to comprehend the advantages of the organized conservation of the rivers and lakes. Fishermen who have known the Thames all their lives tell us that it was never better stocked than at the present time. This is due entirely to the increases of rod

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anglers, and to the development of wisdom and foresight amongst the fraternity of the angle.

Some time must elapse before Spanish legislators can be convinced of the economic utility of a complete revision of the ley de pesca (fishery law). Beyond the enforcement of a close season for salmon, salmon trout, and common trout, and a few inadequate rules respecting the use of nets in fresh-water, nothing is done to protect fish-life. What is the use of protecting spawning fish, when thousands of the fry are scooped out of the small pools of tributaries with poke-nets during dry seasons? I have seen trout as small as whitebait cooked for the table in the Spanish fondas. Imagine a poultry-breeder who protects sitting hens, and kills the chickens about a week after they are hatched. I have referred to the wanton decimation of salmon-parr, and the astonishment of the natives at our plea for the preservation of immature fish.

I am not prepared to say that the rivers throughout Spain could be made the rivals of those of Norway. Mr. Kennedy, in his 'Thirty Seasons in Scandinavia,' tells us of the remarkable productiveness of these Northern rivers. But the Sil and the Minho contain even bigger trout than

those of the Norwegian streams, and are probably only to be beaten in weight, and that rarely, by the trout of New Zealand. For trout of a sport-giving size, Spain is a rival to our own country, despite the primitive and defective fishery law. There is no doubt that Spain might become a fisherman's paradise in the course of a few years. This would tend to the general welfare. More salmon would ascend the rivers to spawn, and more would fall to the rod and line of the angler. In the long-run, netsmen in the tidal estuaries would benefit, for it is obvious that the more salmon that descend the river after spawning, the greater will be the number to return to the river the next season, and that more smolts will go down to come back as grilse. A decade of reckless netting in tidal and fresh water will work havoc in any river. Add to this the inevitable depredations of poachers, employing snares, spears, and deadly dynamite, and what chance remains for the unfortunate salmon?

Trout hatcheries are almost unknown in Spain. A private hatchery was established upon the Bidasoa some years ago, and I believe that King Alphonso rears trout for turning into his own streams. I have also heard of one case of stocking

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a mountain lake in the northern provinces. Trout-rearing would not be necessary in Spain if the law was revised, poaching suppressed, and the use of the net in fresh-water prohibited, except in some cases, where the average size of trout in a lake might be increased by a discreet thinning of undersized fish. Trout are so prolific, and the rivers of Spain so excellently adapted for the production of fish, that sane methods of preservation would be alone sufficient for very many years to come. Rod fishing could not injuriously diminish the stock of fish in such rivers as the Ebro, Ason, Deva, Nalon, Pas, Besaya, Saja, Minho, and Sil, among many others.

Spain might attract anglers from all parts of Europe if the State and the people realized the source of revenue their rivers could be made to yield. The encouragement of legitimate means of taking fish will be fostered by the example of visiting anglers. When the pescadores of the Basque provinces saw that we could catch trout with a rod and fine tackle in the main rivers, some of them doubtless reflected that this was a more profitable form of fishing than poking about for *pequeños* (little ones) in the brooks. They asked

us to buy them some flies in England, and seemed disposed to review their own methods. It will be remembered that at Matarosa the most prosperous of the natives earn their livelihood by the legitimate capture of trout with rod and line. A speculative middle-man of that district purchases the trout from these men, and stores them in a refrigerator until they can be sent to the market. So far as my observation went, these men found that rod fishing paid them better than poaching, and it is interesting to note that they were all fly fishermen. But before rod fishing can become popular in Spain the people must be able to buy suitable tackle. It is pathetic to watch these keen and patient anglers endeavouring to lure trout with their big, clumsy flies, salmon gut, and stiff bamboo poles.

Pisciculture is now a question of legislative interest in nearly every nation. There is quite a literature upon the subject in France. Spain is not without its angling writers. In 1850 Francisco Fernandez de los Senderos published a work upon the fish of the southern coast of Spain. Even as early as 1786 there was issued among the records a paper upon the 'Propagation of Fish and the Method of transporting them to other Lakes and

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Rivers.' Ramon de Silva Ferro wrote a memorandum referring to the industry of fishing as represented in the Universal Exposition of Paris in 1878. One chapter deals with fish-culture, and another with the management of salmon-fisheries. These are among the few works upon angling subjects published in Spain. A list of the books upon Spanish fisheries will be found in '*Bibliotheca Piscatoria*.' The sporting literature of Spain is concerned almost entirely with the national pastime of bull-fighting. Upon this topic there is a mass of authoritative writing. Angling is not regarded as a sport in the Peninsula, and has no enthusiasts who have been urged to sing its charms in verse, nor to write technical treatises upon the gentle art. Manuel Pardo, 11 Espoz y Mina, Madrid, has a few books upon sport, including translations of some English works. Among the works of Cervantes I have only noted one reference to angling. It is in '*Don Quixote*,' where an innkeeper says, 'Sir, you must angle with another bait, or you will catch no fish,' as a rejoinder to an assertion that the books upon chivalry are fictions.

A copy of the laws relating to shooting and

fishing ('Caza y pesca') can be purchased for half a peseta at the booksellers' shops in most towns. This little pamphlet contains the ordinances of 1834, 1879, and 1895. Article I. of the Act of 1895 states that the close time for fishing in fresh-water for salmon, sea-trout, common trout, grayling (umblas), and all fish of the salmon family, lasts for six months and a half—viz., the first day of August to February 15. For rainbow trout the close time is from October 1 until April 15. It would appear from this rule that salmon and trout begin spawning very early in the season in Spain, otherwise the enactment is a strange one. It will be noted that salmon and sea-trout are protected at the very time when they begin to afford the best sport in many of our own rivers. The season for grayling ends in Spain when our own grayling are growing into condition. This curtailment of the open season for trout by two months, and for salmon by three months, seems quite unnecessary.

Article IV. refers to the modification of the law of close time in the case of persons employed in the official establishments of pisciculture. I failed to obtain information concerning these hatcheries.

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Article VII. deals with the penalties for infraction of the fishery law. The Act enjoins that persons found fishing without a license will incur a penalty of from 5 to 25 pesetas. Offenders using dynamite are liable to a fine of not less than 40 and not more than 160 pesetas.

In spite of this and similar decrees, dynamite is still used in the Sil and Minho, and it is extremely doubtful whether 50 per cent. of the fishermen take out a license. These laws practically overlook the existence of rod fishermen, but are concerned with netting and trapping fish. The legitimate angler, in the English sense, is hardly mentioned, for the very simple reason that so few persons follow fishing as a recreation.

The order of procedure in obtaining a fishing license is somewhat complicated. First of all you buy your statutory permit at the estanco. If you look in a Spanish dictionary, you will find that estanco means 'water-tight, embargo, monopoly, tank.' You will be directed to a tobacconist's shop, but you must find the right kind of tobacconist—that is, one holding authority to issue licenses. The license is a green card, worded on the front as follows :

LICENCIA DE PESCA.

4^a CLASE.

5 PESETAS.

Correspondiente á cédulas personales de 6^a clase
en adelante.

PROVINCIA DE GUIPUZCOA.

EL GOBERNADOR CIVIL

concedo licencia á D. V. VALTER M. GALLICHAN
vecino de San Sebastián con cédula personal de — clase
número — para pescar. En San Sebastián á 18 de Marzo
de 1902.

EL GOBERNADOR.

As a letter W is not in the Spanish alphabet, my Christian name proved a stumbling-block to the worthy Governor.

On the back of the license it is announced that the holder has the following 'signs'—namely, age, stature, eyes, beard, colour, and profession. A space is left for writing these particulars. In our case a description of these tokens appeared to be unnecessary, unless it was that the officials were entirely floored in describing a lady angler. It is doubtful whether they had ever been asked to issue a fishing-license to a lady.

This license permits the angler to employ methods of taking fish which would involve him in heavy penalties if he practised them in the United Kingdom.

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I have reached the end of my narrative of fishing and travel in Spain and Portugal. In writing it I have lived again through many of the days of a happy spring and summer. Before me is a post-card just received from a friend, who is wandering in Spain. He writes of blazing sunshine and picturesque towns. The atmosphere and the beauty of Iberia are like nothing else in Europe, and the people are charming and romantic. Farewell, then, for the nonce to the bright land of to-morrow, with its inscrutable customs, quaint prejudices, courteous people, glorious mountains, vast open wastes, brawling rivers, and nimble trout!

December 30, 1911.

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